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WORMS & WOE IN THE FREE CITY ARENA

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ALL-NEW DUNGEONS & DRAGONS ADVENTURES FROM:

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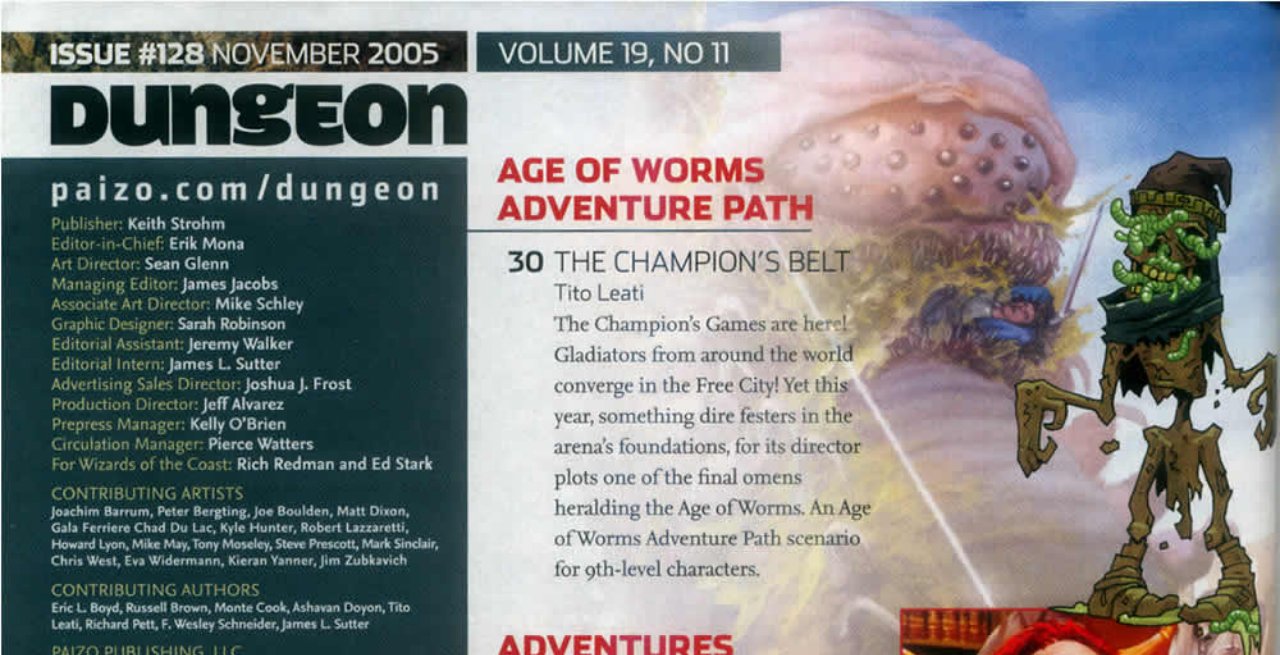

AGE OF WORMS ADVENTURE PATH

30 THE CHAMPION'S BELT
Tito Leati
The Champion's Games are here! Gladiators from around the world converge in the Free City! Yet this year, something dire festers in the arena's foundations, for its director plots one of the final omens heralding the Age of Worms. An Age of Worms Adventure Path scenario for 9th-level characters.

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ON THE COVER

Howard Lyon gives us a glimpse of the fury and the glory that is gladiatorial combat in the Free City Arena.

"Round the arena there was a world of colour so dazzling and moving and twinkling as to make one blink one's eyes... Most of the combatants and their friends had not yet arrived, but one could see from those few who had come how the very people would turn the scene into a bank of flowers, and how the armour would flash, and the scalloped sleeves of the heralds jig in the wind, as they raised their brazen trumpets to their lips to shake the fleecy clouds of winter with joyances and fanfares."

T.H. White
The Once and Future King

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DUNGEON ADVENTURE PLAYER REWARDS!

Take advantage of the RPGA'S Player Rewards program by scoring points with the adventures from this issue of DUNGEON! Each adventure is worth 2 D&D Player Rewards points, and remains active until 12/31/05.

RPGA NETWORK

Drop by www.rpga.com for more details, and use the following adventure codes:

Shut-In (128SI1DN)
The Champion's Belt (128CB1DN)
The Fireplace Level (128FL1DN)

ERIK & JEREMY IN THE TRUE DUNGEON

'Twas the night before Gen Con, and I was headed to the True Dungeon: 6,000 square feet of fake dungeon corridors, "real" traps, costumed NPCs, and a fake fantasy tavern that sells real non-fantasy beer. This special event debuted at the very first Gen Con Indy three years ago, and always sold out right away. I know, I know, it sounds like a bunch of fat guys running around with foam swords, but I'd heard positive reviews from everyone who had managed to play the first two years. Everyone.

The only trouble is, the fine folks who run the True Dungeon only sent us two "Golden Tickets" for the special pre-convention preview event. We had five editors at the show, and all of them wanted to check out the special event. Being the magnanimous magazine overlord that I am, I decided to give everyone else first crack at the tickets, which meant they lasted about three microseconds after they arrived in the office. The boys had heard the same reports I had, and knew that they had to act fast or lose out.

While the two fastest editors were supposed to set off for a night of adventure, I sat in an "Italian" restaurant in downtown Indianapolis shopping mall, drowning my jealousy with DUNGEON Editorial Assistant Young Jeremy Walker. We talked about a lot of things over that meal—the looming convention, plans for the next Adventure Path—but the one unifying issue at hand was our lack of Golden Tickets.

The call came in at 7:30. It was Wes, and I could hear from his voice that he'd had a long day. "The flight in was Hell," he said. "Jason and I both feel like we were run over by the plane. We need some food, and we need some rest, and we need it now. If you want our Golden Tickets, you can have them."

We rushed to the event only to end up waiting for several minutes in a holding area while previous groups shuffled into a huge ballroom that had been transformed into the True Dungeon. Jeremy and I ended up paired with D&D Brand Manager Charles Ryan and his wife, but we were still short of a full squad. Then, hope arrived in the form of a gregarious guy named Henry with a three-ring binder full of $250 worth of wooden "magic item" coins usable in the game. People apparently took the True Dungeon pretty seriously, and I eagerly invited Henry (and his loot) to join our group.

We learned a bit about how to play and then set off for the fantasy tavern, and from there to the dungeon itself. Imagine seven gamers standing in a very dark room. Our flashlight "torch" and glowing "amulet" (rubber ball) hardly did the trick, but the darkness added to the sense of dread and mystery of it all. Spooky haunted house music played from unseen speakers in the cavernous ceiling above, rising to a crescendo every 12 minutes and signaling us that it was time to move on. Most rooms required the players to fight a monster or solve a riddle before moving forward, so the whole affair took on a frantic feel, much like the best sessions of a tabletop game. As ever, we looked to our magic man, our rock, our Henry to see us through the tough times. "Sometimes they hide stuff in the walls," he'd say, and sure enough we'd find a secret door. "Keep a close eye on the floor," he'd suggest, and minutes later someone would find a hidden key. Our Henry knew his stuff. And with his wooden coins decking the party in magic, we had little to fear from monsters or traps.

In the penultimate room, I managed to decode a clue that pointed to the only safe door (out of five) based on short phrases posted above each arch. Choosing the wrong door meant instant death, so I was pleased with my hypothesis, and we each jumped into darkness and (eventually) safety. Each of us except poor Henry, of course, who wanted to hedge his bets. Naturally, his character was disintegrated, and the rest of us managed to survive to the final room.

Where we were sucked into the Abyss forever. I wasn't happy to die, but I was happy to experience a truly unique role-playing experience, and to live longer than the guy who'd spent a quarter of a thousand dollars on wooden nickels.

ERIK

Erik Mona
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Tell us what you think of this issue.

Write to: Prison Mail, Paizo Publishing, 2700 Richards Road, Suite 201, Bellevue, WA 98005-4200 or send an email to dungeon@paizo.com.

Check out the *Dungeon* messageboards at paizo.com/dungeon

Dungeon #125

Dungeon #125 featured "The Three Faces of Evil," the deadly second installment of the Age of Worms Adventure Path. The adventure, written by fan-made-good newly minted Wizards of the Coast developer Mike Mearls, claimed the life of one member of our playtest campaign, *Dragon* editor Mike McArtor's mute (and often unconscious) ninja Vyth, about whom I wrote an editorial in *Dragon* #331. Poor, poor Vyth, victim of a near-max-damage *magic missle* cast by the despicable Faceless One. Let's all take a moment of silence to remember the bravery of his sacrifice, and the suckiness of his rolling.

"Pit of the Fire Lord," the third and final episode in the Shards of Eberron Campaign Arc, reprised part of last year's popular Eberron-themed D&D Open, the most popular D&D tournament adventure in the world. This year, *Dragon* editor Jason Bulmahn contributed to the D&D Open, and his efforts might just show up in these pages some time in the future. Write in and let us know how this "tournament-to-magazine" experiment worked out for you, and we'll see where we go from there.

Ok, so that's two installments of ongoing series... what would be a good way to hook in new readers, Mona? I know, how about a sequel! "Seekers of the Silver Forge," while easily playable as a stand-alone high-level adventure, also doubled as a sequel to "The Death of Lashimire," a githyanki-focused adventure from way back in *Dungeon* #116. If there's one thing I've learned since joining the Paizo staff, it's that everyone loves the githyanki. In summary, with three months of hindsight: Too many multi-parters, but a fun issue nonetheless.

Back issues of *Dungeon* #125 and dozens of other great issues are available at paizo.com.

Prison Mail

Magic Rings are Boooring!

I have been picking up the occasional *Dungeon* since its earliest issues and have always enjoyed it. However, I think in the past year or so you've made a lot of changes that have improved the quality of the magazine enough that I actually decided to get a subscription. Here are some of the things I think were good changes.

First, I'm glad that the minigames were dropped and each issue now contains three solid adventures. I thought some of the minigames were kind of quirky and interesting, but I never used them. I like that you are now publishing one high-level, mid-level, and low-level adventure every issue. I also am a fan of the Campaign Arcs. I've been impressed with the Age of Worms Adventure Path so far, and I'm glad I got in on it at the very beginning. I'm also a fan of some of the returns to iconic locations like Maure Castle and the Isle of Dread. I think another issue like "Maure Castle" (*Dungeon* #112) would be great.

My only complaint is relatively minor, and is more to do with the wealth by level rules than anything else. I find that some of the NPC magical items and treasures get a little dull and redundant—I see a lot of *rings of protection*, *amulets of natural armor*, and weapons and armor. I like it when the magical items seem a little more exotic or unique, and I think this can be done without having to make them overly powerful. However, all in all I think *Dungeon* magazine is better than it has ever been, so keep up the good work, and I look forward to watching the Age of Worms unfold. I may even have to find a way to kill off the characters in my current campaign so that I can start the Age of Worms.

Drew Langston
Via Email

Thanks for the kind words, Drew, and good luck killing off your current group to make way for the Age of Worms! We'll see what we can do about making the treasure more interesting, but sometimes an amulet of natural armor *is exactly what hits the spot for a given encounter. Check out "The Fireplace Level" in this issue for some new items and a new weapon quality.*

Who Knew?

I just wanted to share a great experience with you guys. My wife, son, and I all play a very popular MMORPG. Well, recently my cable went out and I was told it was going to be out for at least two weeks (they had to dig a new line). So I decided to pull out my old basic set and show my son where all the MMORPGs came from. I rolled up a character for him and my wife and also rolled up a dungeon and DM'ed. At first I was thinking "man, we sure are spoiled with computers. It has been 2 hours and they were not even a third of the way through the dungeon." But then something wonderful happened. We started having fun. It didn't matter that they did not have a ton of "phat lewt." They were not upset that they did not make level 8 in the first hour. We were too busy laughing when my son rolled an 18 attack on a target 12 AC but only did 1 damage on a 1d6–1 roll of one. They did not notice that

they were not getting "mad xp." They were so immersed in the game hoping that their Reflex save would get them out of the way of a swinging axe trap. I then realized how boring it was to spam specials and hit auto-attack. I had forgotten all the intense suspense and strategy in a PNP.

Well, the cable came back on and they immediately ran to the MMORPG. But after doing about three quests, my son said to me, "When are we going to play D&D again?" I said, "We can play anytime you want, but I thought you would rather play on the computer." He said, "Can we play each one every other day?" Then I suddenly had hope for the future. I never expected him to want to play a game that required taking notes, doing math, and having to use your imagination when he could play a video game that did it all for you. Anyway, we have been PnP'ing ever since. Which is why I picked up your magazine. I started to run out of ideas for dungeons. We are currently playing "Salvage Operation" (DUNGEON #123). I want to say thank you for prolonging my family's gaming with your magazine.

HaloSlayer
Via Email

Next Month in Dungeon

Dungeon #129

Murder in Oakbridge

by Uri Kurlianchik

The PCs match wits with a brilliant assassin driven insane by the accidental death of her daughter years ago. To solve this dark murder mystery, the PCs must use their perception and intellect along with their arsenal of spells and abilities. An EBERRON adventure for 5th-level characters.

A Gathering of Winds

by Wolfgang Baur

The PCs return to Diamond Lake to consult with the sage Allustan, only to find the place in shambles after a visit from the black dragon Ilthane. Allustan himself is missing, and tracking him leads to an active gate within the Whispering Cairn. Can the PCs survive the fully-active true tomb of Icosiol, General of the Wind Dukes of Aaqa, and claim a fragment of the *Rod of Seven Parts*? An Age of Worms Adventure Path scenario for 11th-level characters.

The Twisted Run

by Wil Upchurch

Faerun's Northlands are home to orcs, trolls, lycanthropes, and worse. When the Lady Alustriel brought the northern nations together, the Beastlord Malar could no longer watch as his wilderness was slowly civilized. The god chose his most worthy follower, anth-Malar, suffused him with divine essence, and tasked him with bringing devastation and chaos to all who defiled the wilderness. A FORGOTTEN REALMS adventure for 17th-level characters.

Super Supplements

I read Mark McCandless' letter from #125 and totally agree that I would willingly pay extra for premium add-ons to adventures available as a single monthly download, which would include all the maps (with DM's and player's versions), additional data and information that didn't make it to print and especially the NPC data. Before each game I usually put all the major NPCs on 3x5 cards for easy reference during the game, and this would be an immense time saver for me.

I think a $49.95 annual "premium" DUNGEON subscription that included all this bonus material, plus maybe some other goodies, would not be unreasonable. The regular subscription would still be available, of course.

Stefan Happ
El Paso, TX

The DUNGEON online supplements we already provide each month represent about the sum total of what we can afford to release every month, since the magazine has a voracious appetite for manpower on both the art and editorial sides. Of the items you requested, the only thing we don't include is the NPC stat blocks. We've got to give people a reason to actually buy the magazine, after all!

Thanks a for Nothing!

The Diamond Lake Backdrop in issue #124 was so nice I decided to use it as my group's headquarters, especially since you promised to provide a lot more info on the region the next issue.

So what do I get in issue #125?

Bugger all, that's what.

"Faced with the difficult prospect of having to cut 5,000 words from an adventure..." I thought that's what editors do—silly me.

Guess what? Not everyone has an internet link, so not everyone can download the info they were promised. So once again, gee thanks, for not doing what you promised. Thanks a bunch.

You're giving it away for free, big deal.

Some of us can't collect.

Steve
Via Email

The irony of this complaint coming in the form of an email is especially rich. If you don't have regular internet access, the local library or copy shop can likely set you up for the few minutes you'll need to download "Age of Worms Overload," a huge free online supplement that includes some of the cut material. I realize that that leaves a lot of our "stranded" subscribers who are in prison or deployed in Iraq without this material, but as the file is not strictly necessary to play the Age of Worms Adventure Path, you ought to be able to get by without it. If not, your best bet is convincing a friend or a relative to track it down for you and send it to you through the regular mail service.—Erik Mona

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Shut-In

BY F. WESLEY SCHNEIDER & JAMES L. SUTTER,
BY MIKE MAY & KIERAN YANNER,
BY KYLE HUNTER,
ANY SETTING, LOW-LEVEL (1ST–5TH), URBAN,

Not all evil spawns in ancient ruins or on fiendish planes. Sometimes, all corruption needs to take root is a jealous memory, cultivated bitterness, and a lonely place to bloom.

"Shut-In" is a DUNGEONS & DRAGONS adventure suitable for four 2nd-level characters, and takes place in an urban locale in any campaign setting.

Adventure Background

Swan Street: home to the city's oldest, wealthiest, and most influential families. A quiet, well-patrolled row of gated villas and manors. A pristine haven away from the bustle and grime of the wider city. Residences of nobles waiting to die.

Once home to some of the most respected addresses in the city, Swan Street fell out of fashion with the bourgeois decades ago. Only by the grace of nostalgia and the thinnest veneer of respect for the aged inhabitants do these poorly kept estates linger, their residents sinking into ruin as surely as the homes. The greatest fears among the Swan Street gentry were the loss of the stipends their children provided and the inescapable encroachment of time.

At least, until the murders began.

Over the course of four months, three slayings occurred on Swan Street, along with a rash of related killings elsewhere in the city's most-respected neighborhoods. Numerous aristocrats have simply disappeared. All this is attributed to a bloody-minded boogeyman who, thanks to his penchant for cutting the throats of his victims, came to be known as the Swan Street Slicer.

A manhunt of unprecedented scale swept the city, but the Slicer evaded capture with maddening ease. In the end it was not the fruit of the investigation but rather the shrieks of Ms. Ceseli Tuner-Dromdal and a nearby guard patrol that captured the killer as he tried to invade her mother's Swan Street estate.

Incarcerated and tried with extraordinary swiftness, the Swan Street Slicer—a deranged, mute halfling known as Peck—was sentenced to death in less than three days' time. Yet en-route from the courthouse to death-row, a cart accident caused the horses pulling the murderer's conveyance to panic and bolt. When the constables caught up to the ruined vehicle, Peck was gone.

Thrown firmly back into the grip of a citywide panic, enraged nobles now demand the heads of city guard leaders as fervently as they fortify their homes. Understaffed and overworked, the whole of the city's constabulary prowls the streets in force, looking for the shred of evidence or stroke of luck that will lead them back to the murderer,

deputizing any soul able and trustworthy enough to help. On Swan Street, life goes on as it always has, except now its residents wait for a death of a different kind.

Adventure Synopsis

The PCs are recruited to help track down the escaped Swan Street Slicer. First captured at the home of Lady Auraluna Dromdal and her daughter Ceseli (herself widowed a month earlier by the murderer) the guard has thoroughly investigated the property but, under pressure from more influential nobles, cannot dedicate any manpower to babysitting a pair of spinsters. Thus, the PCs are given the dubious honor of assuring that no harm comes to the duo of discarded nobles. Coming to Dromdal House, however, reveals that more is afoot than anyone suspects, and that it may in fact be the PCs who need protection.

Adventure Hooks

"Shut-In" begins with a killer on the loose, a city guard stretched to its limits, and a family in need of protection. The PCs might become involved with the events taking place at Dromdal House in a variety of ways.

- The overtaxed city guard recruits the PCs to perform the simple but tedious task of watching over the Dromdal family until the Slicer is caught. Payment includes 100 gp apiece and the favor of one of the city's oldest—if not its most influential—families.
- Having lived in the city for over a century, the Dromdal family might have patronized any number of local developments, artists, religious undertakings, or even magical academies. Hearing of their longtime patron's distress, a high-ranking and well-wishing member of an organization to which the PCs have ties sends them to protect the Dromdals.

THE SWAN STREET SLICINGS

After four months of terror, the city is abuzz with talk of the Swan Street Slicer and his recent escape. A DC 15 Gather Information or Knowledge (local) check turns up the public history of the case, as described above in the Adventure Background.

The Slicer's Story

A cast-off youth raised on the streets and left to fend for himself from a young age, Peck either never learned or simply lacks the facilities to speak. Happenstance led Peck to Auraluna Dromdal only weeks after her daughter's marriage, at a time when she felt most abandoned by her daughter's departure. Treating the youthful-looking halfling vagabond as if he were something between a favorite pet and a new doll, Lady Dromdal took Peck in and amused herself dressing him up until her disgusted husband tried to kick him out. Lord Dromdal's resultant murder at Peck's jittery hands only further ingratiated the unstable halfling to the old woman, who had long since grown tired of her simpering husband. Eager for her further attention, Peck performed any task the aged spinster requested, no matter how depraved, and it was at her call that he became the Swan Street Slicer.

PECK, THE SWAN STREET SLICER **CR 4**

Male halfling rogue 3/barbarian 1
CE Small humanoid
Init +8; **Senses** Listen +5, Spot +3
Languages Common, Halfling (cannot speak)

AC 16, touch 15, flat-footed 12
hp 27 (4 HD)
Fort +6, **Ref** +8, **Will** +3; evasion

Spd 30 ft.
Melee mwk straight razor +4 (1d2–1/18–20)
Base Atk +3; **Grp** –2
Combat Options sneak attack +2d6
Special Atk rage 1/day
Combat Gear *potion of bull's strength*, *potion of cure moderate wounds* (2), *potion of spider climb*

Abilities Str 8, Dex 18, Con 14, Int 8, Wis 12, Cha 13
SQ trapfinding, trap sense +1
Feats Improved Initiative, Quick Draw
Skills Balance +8, Climb +7, Disguise +5, Handle Animal +3, Hide +14, Jump +4, Knowledge (nobility and royalty) +2, Listen +5, Move Silently +12, Sleight of Hand +5, Spot +3, Survival +3, Tumble +10
Possessions combat gear, masterwork straight razor, *bracers of armor +1*, masterwork thieves' tools, noble's outfit, pouch with 13 gp

Rage (Ex): When raging, Peck's stats change as follows:
AC 14, touch 13, flat-footed 10
hp 35 (4 HD)
Fort +8, **Will** +5
Melee mwk straight razor +6 (1d2+1/18–20)
Grp +0
Abilities Str 12, Con 18
Skills Climb +9, Jump +6

The Dromdal Family

A fixture of the city for well over a century, the Dromdals and their once prestigious estate, Dromdal House, have maintained a level of comfortable yet declining prestige over the last several decades. Once a powerful name in the lumber and wood-crafting trades, distant in-laws and faceless agents now handle

Check DC	Result
10	The Dromdals are an old family who made their fortune off the sale of exotic lumbers, furniture, and other wooden goods.
15	Auraluna, the matron of the Dromdal family, was once a highly desired beauty, although she recieves few visitors these days. Her only child Ceseli recently lost her husband to the Swan Street Slicer.
20	The Dromdals are in decline. Auraluna has become incredibly bitter in her old age and is confined to a wheelchair. Ceseli has returned to the family home on Swan Street since her husband's recent murder.
25	Before the Swan Street killings began, Lord Dromdal left on an extended constitutional to a Dromdal holding in a warmer clime. The Dromdals retain only one servant, a simple-minded halfling named Barnsworth.
30	Auraluna did not approve of her daughter's marriage to the nouveau-riche Mikael Tuner. In her declining years, Auraluna has transformed much of Dromdal House into a museum dedicated to her youth.

most of the family's affairs. PCs interested in exploring the Dromdal family history might do so with a bardic knowledge or Knowledge (nobility and royalty) check.

Lady Auraluna Dromdal

Nearly eighty years old, the vivaciousness that once inspired Lady Dromdal has been replaced with bitterness and jealously. Having lost the beauty and desirability that were once synonymous with her name, she imagines her aging peers and their spoiled broods laughing at her fall from the social highlife. Paranoid and concerned only with the past—and what vestiges of it she can hold on to or fake—Auraluna has employed Peck, her "little imp," in taking revenge against all those who have supposedly wronged her. To her, this means an entire class of aging nobles and their families.

The uncontested mistress of Dromdal House, Lady Dromdal is particular to the point of obsession about every aspect of her home. She carries the only keys to every lock in the house (doors, cabinets, drawers, etc.) on a thick metal ring she keeps attached to her wheelchair (she notices the theft of these keys in minutes). Due to her immobility, Auraluna only enters areas **5**, **6**, **9**, **12**, and **15** of Dromdal House with any regularity, but notices changes or missing items in these rooms in 1d6 hours. She also notices if any of the locked doors in the house have been unlocked in 2d6 hours.

The only creatures Auraluna treats with anything resembling love are her pampered, ever-present, and highly protective dogs. Sachi is a small show dog with exquisitely groomed fur that is rarely seen out of Auraluna's lap. Baron is a massive and surly mastiff with dark fur and a penchant for low growls.

Note: Although Auraluna is a 9th-level character, her CR is quite lower than normal due to her advanced age and lack of gear appropriate for her level.

Lady Auraluna Dromdal **CR 4**

Female human bard 3/aristocrat 6
NE Medium humanoid
Init –1; **Senses** Listen +4, Spot +3
Languages Common, Elven, Halfling

AC 10, touch 10, flat-footed 10
hp 12 (9 HD)
Fort +0, **Ref** +4, **Will** +13

Spd 5 ft. (15 ft. with wheelchair)
Melee unarmed strike +3 (1d3–3, nonlethal)
Base Atk +6; **Grp** +3
Atk Options Combat Expertise
Combat Gear *wand of magic missile* (4 charges)
Special Atk *fascinate*
Spells Known (CL 3)
1st (2/day)—*charm person* (DC 16), *lesser confusion* (DC 16), *unseen servant*
0 (3/day)—*daze* (DC 14), *mage hand*, *mending*, *message*

Abilities Str 5, Dex 8, Con 4, Int 14, Wis 17, Cha 19

SQ bardic knowledge, bardic music, countersong, inspire competence, inspire courage +1

Feats Combat Expertise, Iron Will, Persuasive, Skill Focus (Bluff), Spell Focus (enchantment)

Skills Appraise +4, Bluff +15, Diplomacy +14, Forgery +3, Gather Information +11, Intimidate +12, Knowledge (arcana) +6, Knowledge (local) +6, Knowledge (nobility and royalty) +11, Knowledge (history) +5, Listen +4, Perform (oratory) +14, Sense Motive +8, Sleight of Hand +3, Spellcraft +4, Use Magic Device +10

Possessions combat gear, *ring of protection* +1, noble's outfit, ring of keys, jewelry worth 500 gp

Sachi, lap dog: hp 13; *Monster Manual* 275 (rat).

Baron, mastiff: hp 13; *Monster Manual* 272 (riding dog).

Ceseli Tuner-Dromdal

Auraluna's reserved daughter **Ceseli Dromdal** (NG female human aristocrat 1) spends her life trying to avoid her mother's ire. Withdrawn and verbally abused as a child, her marriage to Mikael Tuner allowed her to escape her oppressive home. Tragically, Mikael became one of the first victims of Auraluna Dromdal's second-hand killings.

Quiet and shy, Ceseli remains traumatized over her husband's death. Anyone who can distract her from her sorrow finds Ceseli to be a charming young woman, although—due to her mother's constant berating—she thinks she's quite the opposite.

Barnsworth

An elderly halfling who's more than a little senile, **Barnsworth** (LG male halfling expert 1) serves as Lady Dromdal's butler and sole servant. Bald save for a wild halo of white hair, Barnsworth dresses in a faded brown suit that accounts for his entire wardrobe. Quiet and willing to stand all manner of verbal abuse, he is charged with cleaning the house, preparing Lady Dromdal's meals, and a number of other menial tasks she invents from day to day. Frail in the extreme, Barnsworth cowers and whimpers if attacked, but doesn't fight back. The aged halfling rarely speaks and occupies his off hours scribbling with palsied hands in his books. If Barnsworth once had a first name, even he has long forgotten it.

Interviewing the Dromdals

Over the course of the adventure, the PCs probably develop a number of questions for Lady Dromdal and Ceseli. If questioned together, Ceseli rarely has the opportunity to answer, with her mother's louder responses always taking precedence. Auraluna becomes even more difficult if the PCs blatantly attempt to sidestep her and ask for her daughter's response, leaving the room "if she's going to be ignored" but demanding her daughter's accompaniment. Barnsworth proves of little help in any investigation, staring cock-eyed and uncomprehending at any inquires not related to cleaning or the evening's meal.

Auraluna and Ceseli have separate answers to each of the following questions, but Ceseli only gives her answers if her mother's not in the room. They only answer questions if they are at least indifferent to the PCs.

Who is Peck after? Why? *Lady Dromdal*: "Me, obviously—since his other victims have all been members of high society, I can only assume that he has some sort of vendetta against the upper crust and is working his way through the ranks. Of course, I suppose he could also be trying to finish the job he started in killing Ceseli's boor of a husband. *[Partially true—Peck is indeed targeting high society, but at Lady Dromdal's behest. She and her daughter are not targets.]*

Ceseli: "I think it might be me… I know Mother doesn't think so, but he already… when he k-killed m-my… oh, Mikael!" The girl breaks into sobs.

Where is Lord Dromdal? *Lady Dromdal*: "He's long suffered from a dreadful chill, and one of his physicians suggested he spend some time in warmer climates, so I packed him off on one of those hunting trips he so loves. I expect he'll be gone at least another month or more." *[Partially true—her husband indeed suffered from ill health and intended to take such a trip before Peck killed him.]*

Ceseli: "Oh, Daddy's off hunting to improve his health to the south—I hope he'll return soon."

What's the story with Barnsworth? *Lady Dromdal*: "We hired him years ago. He works cheap and is quiet—unlike some I could mention. Sometimes he's a little addled, but he's completely harmless. I'm sure he loves being a part of things here, and he'll continue to be for as long as he does his job well."

Ceseli: "Whatever do you mean? He's just Barnsworth."

Do you have any enemies? *Lady Dromdal*: "I've had my share of rivals in my day, of course—primarily jealous debutantes and ex-lovers—but I can't see any of them masterminding something like this. I've definitely never done anything to inspire the wrath of a twisted little halfling."

Ceseli: "I don't think so… maybe other girls jealous over my Mikael?"

Have you noticed anything suspicious since Peck's escape? *Lady Dromdal*: "Aside from your arrival—nothing at all."

Ceseli: "No. Should I have?"

Why is there so much meat in the basement? What are all the receipts for meat for? *Lady Dromdal*: "Lord Dromdal's physician prescribed it to him to supplement his constitution or some such nonsense." *[False. These supplies are for Ritter the death dog.]*

Ceseli: "I have no idea. No one in the house eats it."

Improving Relations

When the PCs first come to Dromdal House, both Lady Dromdal and Ceseli have an attitude of indifferent toward them. As the PCs explore the estate and interact with its residents, a variety of circumstances might influence Auraluna's and Ceseli's opinions toward them.

Every time Lady Dromdal or Ceseli becomes aware of an event that would modify her attitude (whether by being present, being told, or later noticing the effects) the party member most directly involved with the event should make a Diplomacy check for the entire group with any accumulated modifiers to determine if either lady's attitude changes. If Lady Dromdal's attitude ever becomes hostile, she'll attempt to do away with the party by either plotting an ambush with Peck or by luring the PCs into her secret basement chamber. If Ceseli's opinion can be raised to friendly or helpful, she

Event	Diplomacy check modifier (Ceseli)
Attempting to seduce Ceseli.	–4 per attempt
Showing the family album from area **11** to Ceseli.	+2
Blatantly contradicting Auraluna.	+2
Giving Ceseli a gift.	+2 per gift (maximum bonus of +6)
Performing for Ceseli (successful DC 15 check).	+4
Locating letter from Mikael in area **6** and giving it to Ceseli.	+4
Taking Ceseli out of the house.	+6

Event	Diplomacy Modifier (Auraluna)
Caught stealing or breaking something.	–6 per incident
Ignoring or insulting Auraluna.	–4
Taking Ceseli out of the house.	–4
Blatantly contradicting Auraluna.	–2
Auraluna discovers an unlocked door.	–2
Mistreating Baron or Sachi.	–2
Pampering Baron or Sachi.	+2
Talking with Auraluna about her glory days.	+2

has a few more things to say to the PCs. Befriending Ceseli is the easiest way to discover that more is going on at Dromdal house that it seems.

Friendly: "It's good to have people around again. It seems like it's been so long since I've been out of this house."

Helpful: "This house feels so much different than it did when I was younger. I hear sounds from downstairs at night—Mother says it's the foundations settling, but it never made those noises before. It sounds almost like moaning...."

DROMDAL MANOR

Built in a style long out of fashion, pale olive panels, dark green and brown shingles, and shutters the color of pine needles give this manor house a decidedly swampy look. Chipped marble steps flanked by twin lion sculptures lead from the street to a columned porch that wraps around the front and side of the house. Above, numerous windows with closed, peeling shutters or tightly drawn heavy curtains give the house a decidedly abandoned look.

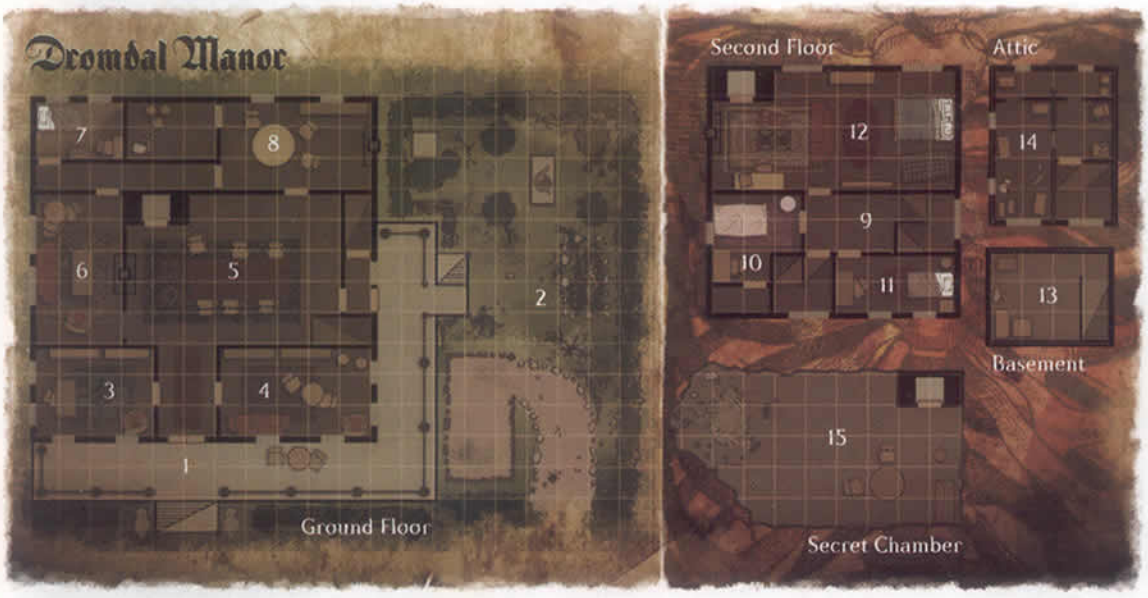
The less-than-stately Dromdal family home is one of the oldest mansions in the city. Long without a staff of servants to keep it in proper repair, the exterior of this three-story building is largely left to rot. The thick yet aging wooden siding that covers the house is relatively easy to climb, requiring only a DC 12 Climb check. A DC 12 Spot check notices the broken window in area **11**. Incredibly self-conscious about the internal state of her manor—and even more so about her own appearance—Lady Dromdal insists that all the windows in the house remain shuttered with the curtains drawn at all times.

Private and possessive, Lady Dromdal keeps many of the doors throughout Dromdal House locked at all times with the keys on her large key ring. Unless noted otherwise, the doors inside the house are locked simple wooden doors.

Strong Wooden Door: 2 in. thick; Hardness 5; hp 20; Break DC 25; Open Lock DC 25.

Simple Wooden Doors: 1 in. thick; Hardness 5; hp 10; Break DC 15; Open Lock DC 20.

Sliding Wooden Doors: 1 in. thick; Hardness 5; hp 8; Break DC 12; Open Lock DC 20.



1 Porch

Upon this leaf-strewn wooden porch sits a small rickety table, some deck chairs, and a set of double doors embossed with lions. The roof and floorboards here creak crankily under a light breeze.

Both the double doors and the side door are kept locked, but the butler, Barnsworth, answers any knocks with remarkable speed. Should the PCs explain their reason for coming to Dromdal House, he obviously doesn't understand and, with a word or less, beckons them into the front or side foyer while he fetches Ceseli.

2 Garden

It has been years since Dromdal House last had a proper gardener, as these gardens more than evidence. While the dry fountain, dead topiaries, and shed full of rusted gardening equipment hold little of interest, the simple black coach parked here once served as the Dromdals' main conveyance and has more recently been used by Peck in his kidnappings, ferrying unconscious bodies from the scenes of his crimes to Lady Dromdal's secret basement chamber. Anyone who opens the unlocked doors on the coach and investigates the interior with a successful DC 21 Search check discovers a series of three long scratches in the wooden doorframe, each ending in a woman's red fingernail. Although the PCs probably have no way of determining this, these scratches are the result of a struggle between Peck and Vivi Knots (see area **15**) when the debutante regained consciousness too early.

The hedge wall surrounding the garden hides a barred gate within and can be climbed with a DC 14 Climb check. The gate here is locked but opens inward and leads out onto Swan Street.

Iron Gate: 2 in. thick; Hardness 10; hp 30; Break DC 25; Open Lock DC 25.

3 Office

The sliding wooden door to this room is closed and locked.

A wide oak desk, with cabinets and bookshelves lining the walls, dominates this stuffy room.

This is the office of the absent Lord Dromdal. Although precisely arranged, the law books on the shelves are coated with a fine layer of dust. The cabinets are stuffed haphazardly with small portraits of a young Auraluna and a collection of poorly-stuffed finches that bleed cotton from open beaks and empty eye sockets. Except for a simple hourglass worth 25 gp, none of the decorations here are of any significant value.

Among the stationary, quills, and inks on and within the desk are a number of receipts, some fresh and others aged and crumbling. While most account for routine expenditures in a manor house of this size, a DC 15 Search check uncovers a stack of six recent bills, each for a 200-pound side of beef.

4 Salon

Like its counterpart across the foyer, the sliding wooden door to this room is also closed and locked. Once a salon filled with expensive examples of the furniture that made up much of the Dromdal family trade, such finery now only brings painful memories. The shelves under the sheets are bare and the furniture is elegant but unremarkable.

5 Dining Room

A dense mahogany banquet table fills the center of this room, circled by nearly a dozen high-backed chairs. In a prominent position over the fireplace hangs an almost life-sized painting of a raven-haired beauty. Wearing a glamorous, jewel-studded white dress, the young woman looks over her shoulder coyly from her place upon a staircase. On the opposite side of the room rises the same flight of steps depicted in the painting.

This dining hall is one of the few rooms that Lady Dromdal still uses, eating a bland meal of turnip stew every night. The painting here is of her in her prime, commissioned by her doting parents from one of the city's most revered artists. A masterpiece in its own right, the huge picture and heavy wooden frame are worth 400 gp, but nothing can convince Auraluna to part with it.

In a corner of the room is a special elevator created to facilitate Lady Dromdal's movement through the house in her wheelchair. The elevator car can lift 500 pounds and operates using a complex series of ropes and weights. Made of plain wood, only a single keyhole mars the car's interior. A key—held by Lady Dromdal—can be used to raise or lower the car, and the sliding doors on each floor close and lock if the car is not present. There is no keyhole on these doors so the locks cannot be picked, although a successful DC 22 Disable Device check or merely breaking the doors allows entrance to the open shaft. If the car is not present, the descent from here to area **15** is 20 feet.

6 Living Room

Due to the chill that Lady Dromdal insists infuses the house, this fireplace is lit promptly at dusk every night and doused at dawn, regardless of the outside temperature. In the northeastern corner is a disguised servant's door made to look like part of the wall. A DC 12 Spot check reveals it with little effort. A lost love letter from Mikael is folded inside one of several books on an end table, requiring a DC 20 Search check to locate.

7 Butler's Quarters

This is the bedroom of Barnsworth the butler. The bedspread is perfectly white, and the wardrobe contains one other brown suit identical to the one he's currently wearing. Barnsworth sleeps only a few hours a night, and once the rest of the household has gone to bed he spends most of his evenings wandering the halls or sitting quietly in the single chair facing the corner.

A DC 14 Search check finds twenty tattered journals underneath the mattress, in the drawers, and under the sheets of the bed. Each is filled with names and descriptions of a wide variety of people, mostly wealthy humans—passersby Barnsworth sees from day to day. If asked about the markings the halfling thinks for a second and

responds "I like to write," refusing to elaborate.

8. Kitchen and Pantry

This is a standard manor house kitchen—large stove and countertops, shelves stuffed with condiments, and a small round table and chairs where servants might take their meals. A door leads into a small pantry piled high with crates and barrels of various foodstuffs.

9. Upper Hallway

The doors from this hall to areas **11** and **12** are kept locked at all times.

10. Ceseli's Room

This is the room of a young girl, complete with a frilly canopy bed, vanity mirror, and walk-in closet. The décor is done in muted tones of lavender and pink.

This is Ceseli's room, which has remained the same since she was a girl. Ceseli spends most of her time reading at a small end table or staring vacantly into the mirror. Her closet is packed thick with fine outfits, all expensive yet demure, and a wedding dress hangs prominently near the front of the rack. A DC 15 Search check uncovers a pile of tear-stained letters from her late husband in the bottom drawer of the vanity, in which he awkwardly expresses his love.

11. Guest Room

Serving first as a simple guestroom and later as the bedroom of Lord Dromdal, this bedroom currently has no occupant. The window here was broken in a recent storm and Lady Dromdal sees no reason to fix it, merely closing and locking the door to the room.

A DC 15 Search check reveals a weathered leather scrapbook under the bed. This was kept by Lord Dromdal and catalogs many of Ceseli's youthful accomplishments. Restoring it to her might help improve her mood.

12. Lady Dromdal's Room

An ornate canopied bed, stacked high with silk and lace-covered pillows, takes up almost a full quarter of this room, while a small fireplace, antique vanity, and several lacquered shelves fill much of the remainder. Beside the bed squats an animal cage, its bottom covered by a single stained, overstuffed pillow.

This elegant bedroom stinks of herbal medications, perfumes, dog, and age. Most of the various shelves hold faded portraits of Auraluna in her youth and curios from that time: brittle ribbons, dried flowers, chintzy gifts, and the like.

The upper entry to the elevator is in this room and is exactly like the one in area **5**. If the doors here are somehow opened without the car present, the descent from here to area **15** is 40 feet.

Treasure: Those who inspect the vanity find the drawers locked (Open Lock DC 20). Inside, among the brushes, handheld mirrors, and several wigs, are a dozen empty vials and two filled with red liquid. The filled vials are *potions of bull's strength* that Auraluna gives Peck in order to facilitate his abductions.

13. Basement

Most of the items stored down here are mundane—spare sheets, cleaning supplies, and food that needs to be kept cool. A DC 15 Search check uncovers several large sacks of aging heavily-salted meat. If asked, Ceseli knows nothing of what's in the basement and Lady Dromdal dismissively explains that the lord of the house was quite fond of meat, but that they've had little use for it since he's been away.

14. Attic

The simple wooden door leading to the attic steps is locked.

The multiple rooms on this floor have been given over to storing countless crates, unused furniture, and clutter from decades of occupancy. Every air current is made visible by the dust that seems to suffuse each breath. A worn, cymbal-wielding monkey doll in a frayed red vest stares from an empty doorway in the wall opposite.

Incredibly dusty—even by the standards of Dromdal House—and dense with stale air, this entire floor is filled with decades of worthless yet inescapable family detritus. A DC 16 Search of the area reveals what few items might be considered treasure. Those with especially keen eyes, who succeed at a DC 20 Search check discover a crate with less dust on it, filled with relatively new clothing seemingly made for an 8- to 10-year-old boy. Cute to the point of absurdity (all ruffles, buttons, and bows) this clothing was ordered by Auraluna to "dress-up" Peck. She thinks the outfits are simply darling and the halfling enjoys them as well.

Treasure: A masterwork rapier and a darkwood buckler (each stylized with the Dromdal family lion), old jewelry worth 80 gp, and a collection of worn, cracked, and rather creepy dolls and stuffed animals molder in various places throughout the attic.

15. Secret Chamber (EL 4)

The scent of wet animal, waste, and spiced herbs fill this partially-worked stone chamber. Immediately apparent is a row of stone spectators; earthen faces jutting out of the smooth wall in an uneven row. At the end of the line, two of the facades seem fleshy—living heads fused into the moist basement rock, one choking with weak, exhausted whimpers. Deeper in the chamber, the even walls give way to raw stone in a natural alcove laden with straw and splintered bones. Back near the elevator, facing the audience of horrid stone visages, sit a pair of dainty chairs and a table set for tea.

In an effort to recapture the adoration of her youth, Auraluna has had Peck kidnap elderly acquaintances, aged past lovers, and some of the most beautiful young nobles in the city, imprisoning them in this naturally occurring cavern beneath her home. Auraluna has entombed her "guests" in the walls here, using her *wand of stone shape* and leaving only their faces exposed. From these confines her captives have no choice but to suffer visits from the crazed old woman, bear her recollections, and dote on her ego in the hope of being released. Auraluna comes to this room to take tea with her visitors almost every day, but she doesn't care for their needs enough to feed

them regularly, instead letting them expire gruesomely within the walls over a matter of weeks. When this occurs, she merely uses her wand to cover over their faces, leaving behind a tormented death mask as a grim trophy.

Currently, thirteen bodies are trapped within the walls. Only two of these captives are still alive. The first is **Cole Chartsheim** (LG male human aristocrat 2), the twenty-two-year-old grandson of Auraluna's first lover. The second is **Vivi Knots** (CG female half-elf aristocrat 1/expert 2) a beautiful actress. When the PCs discover the room, Cole is stable at –8 hp (but risks losing additional hit points every hour) and Vivi is barely conscious at 0 hp. Both have been highly traumatized by their imprisonment and want nothing more than freedom. Using the *wand of stone shape* or dealing 10 points of damage to the relatively weak stone entrapping them (hardness 8) proves the easiest way to free either captive. Once released and calmed enough to speak rationally, the prisoners can tell the PCs of their kidnapping by Peck and the indulgent visits made by Lady Dromdal.

Creature: Auraluna always had an attachment to canines, so when she requested a rare pet, Lord Dromdal had no choice but to comply. This led to her acquisition of Ritter, a death dog pup. Ill suited to life within the manor, Auraluna kept the dog in the dark rooms of the house, first the basement and then this chamber. Pampered and utterly obedient to Auraluna, the overgrown death dog protects his mistress's secret lair, immediately attacking anyone else who enters unattended by the lady of the house.

RITTER **CR 4**

Advanced male death dog
NE Large magical beast
Fiend Folio 41

Init +1; **Senses** darkvision 60 ft., low-light vision, scent; Listen +6, Spot +4

AC 17, touch 12, flat-footed 15
hp 32 (4 HD)
Fort +8, **Ref** +5, **Will** +2

Spd 50 ft.
Melee 2 bites +9 (1d8+6 plus disease)
Base Atk +4; **Grp** +4
Special Atk trip

Abilities Str 22, Dex 13, Con 18, Int 4, Wis 13, Cha 7
Feats Power Attack, Weapon Focus (bite)
Skills Hide +2, Listen +7, Move Silently +4, Spot +4

Disease (Ex): Any creature hit by this death dog's bite attack must succeed at a DC 16 Fortitude save or contract a disease. The incubation period is 1 day, and the disease deals 1d4 points of Strength damage and 1d3 Constitution damage.

Trip (Ex): When the death dog hits with its bite attack it can attempt to trip its opponent as a free action without making a touch attack or provoking an attack of opportunity. If the attempt fails, the opponent cannot react to trip the death dog.

Treasure: Looking over the preparation table reveals several earthenware canisters filled with a variety of teas, a tabletop warming brazier, a delicate tea pot, and Auraluna's *wand of stone shape* (4 charges).

Event 1: Dinner Party

The day that the PCs meet Lady Dromdal and her household happens to be the day that she's hosting a small dinner party at her manor. A DC 10 Diplomacy check is sufficient to get the PCs invited, as Auraluna is somewhat starved for attention. Guests include **Jebediah Stewardsfield** (LN male human expert 2), a greasy but ambitious banker whom Auraluna hopes to set up with Ceseli, **Nina Guesenholt** (LG female human aristocrat 5), another slightly senile spinster who's attached herself to Auraluna in a hopeless attempt to gain the popularity she lacked in her youth, and **Ned Guesenholt** (LG male human aristocrat 1), Nina's dim-witted but good-natured nephew.

While the party revolves primarily around polite small talk and gossip, several events during the evening might present opportunities to further ingratiate the PCs to (or infuriate) Ceseli and Lady Dromdal. For example, some of the following situations might arise over the course of dinner.

The Dating Game: Stewardsfield makes blatant advances toward Ceseli, aided by Lady Dromdal's attempts to play matchmaker. Assisting Stewardsfield and Lady Dromdal's attempts gains the PCs a +2 modifier on future Diplomacy checks made to influence Auraluna, but a –2 penalty on such checks made to influence Ceseli. Alternatively, extracting Ceseli from her uncomfortable situation incurs the opposite modifiers.

Release the Hounds: Baron (who has been present on a pillow during the entire meal) begins baying at some unheard disturbance. Any PC making a DC 16 Handle Animal check to calm the mastiff gains the PCs a +2 bonus on future Diplomacy checks with both Auraluna and Ceseli.

Elephant in the Room: Ned and Stewardsfield begin discussing the death of Ceseli's husband in less than sensitive tones. Changing the subject gains the PCs a +2 bonus on future Diplomacy checks toward Ceseli, while scolding whoever brought up the topic nets another +2 bonus.

Event 2: Nocturnal Noises

Should the PCs require a greater reason to investigate the elevator than mere curiosity, they might overhear strange noises (with a DC 16 Listen check) in the night as Lady Dromdal descends to feed Ritter. If asked about the noises, Auraluna explains that she was merely fetching herself a cup of warm milk to help her sleep. After these noises occur, a DC 16 Search check reveals traces of blood

Scaling the Adventure

"Shut-In" is designed for a group of four 2nd-level characters, but can easily be adapted for parties of other levels.

1st-level characters: Reduce Peck to a rogue 1/barbarian 1 and Auraluna to a bard 2/aristocrat 2 without Spell Focus (enchantment). Auraluna's dog, Baron, should be locked in his cage during the final fight, and Auraluna does not think to release him. The death dog in area **15** should become a typical, unadvanced death dog.

3rd–4th-level characters: Add a level of rogue and a level of barbarian to Peck, as well as two levels of bard to Auraluna. Add *sleep* to Auraluna's list of 1st-level spells, and *enthrall*, *scare*, and *suggestion* to her list of 2nd-level spells. In addition, the death dog in area **15** should be advanced to 6 HD.

on the dumbwaiter floor, which Lady Dromdal explains away as the remains of Baron's dinner.

Should a further push be required, a DC 18 Listen check on the second night detects the sound of moaning from below the house. Both Lady Dromdal and Ceseli explain that these are merely the groans of the aged house settling, but they are in fact the moans of Vivi Knots in area **15**.

Event 3: The Swan Street Slicer (EL 4)

Upon discovering Auraluna's secret sanctuary (area **15**), the PCs likely confront Lady Dromdal. Regardless of the time, she lounges in her room (area **12**), meeting with Peck and planning his next murderous "outing."

If the PCs approach Lady Dromdal's room stealthily or barge in without warning, they'll catch the crazed pair unaware. Upon the PCs' entrance, Peck stands near an open window, Auraluna reclines in bed, and Baron lies within his cage. Caught with the halfling, Lady Dromdal attempts to mislead the PCs, feigning surprise and panic at Peck's presence. Peck uses his rage ability and attacks the nearest PC, but flees out the window if the battle turns against him. If it seems the PCs don't believe Auraluna's act, she spends a round freeing Baron and ordering him to attack, then uses her bardic music, magic, and *wand of magic missiles* to aid Peck from bed.

If the PCs announce their presence before entering Lady Dromdal's room, Peck takes that time to hide amid the room's heavy curtains and Auraluna opens the door to Baron's cage. Should the PCs then accuse the old woman of her murderous activities, Peck sneak attacks the nearest PC and then begins raging, while Auraluna commands Baron to attack, then uses her own abilities.

Within 1d6 rounds of the fray beginning, Ceseli appears and attempts to break up the fight. While she doesn't attack the PCs, she hysterically tries to prevent them from attacking her mother, regardless of what proof she is presented with. Nothing short of taking Ceseli to the secret chamber under the house convinces her of her mother's misdeeds and role in the death of her husband. What effect this revelation might have on Ceseli's fragile psyche is left to the DM.

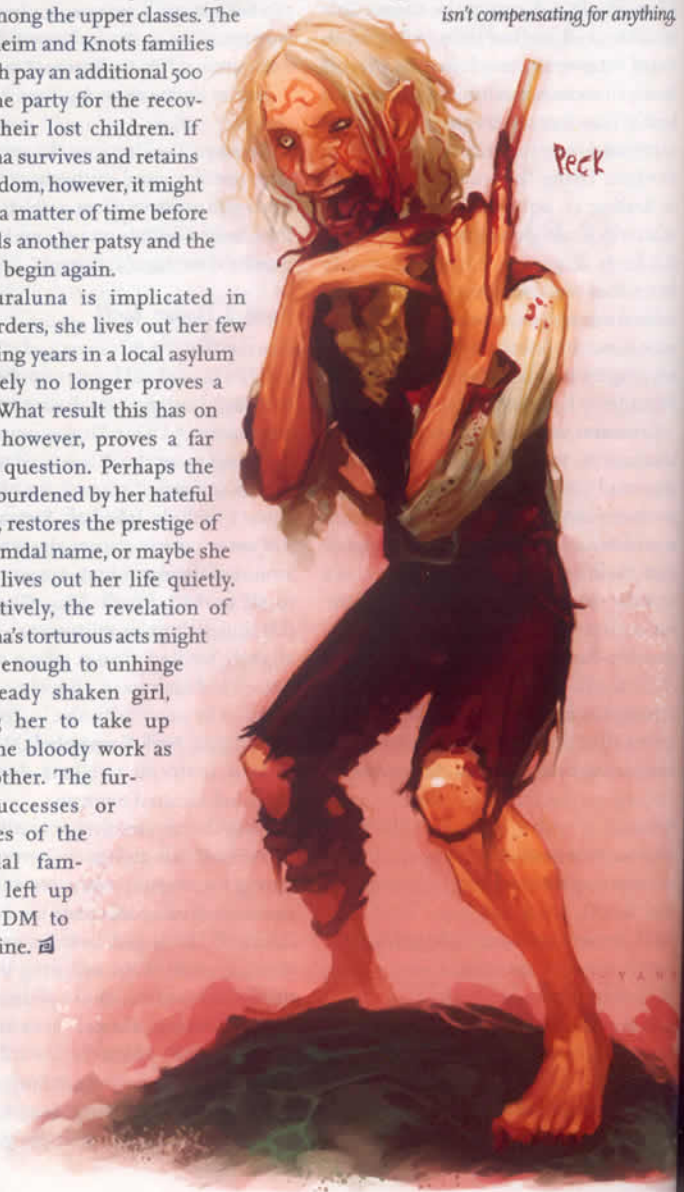
Concluding the Adventure

Depending on what the PCs discover and whom they choose to believe, the adventure can end in a number of ways. The most basic success involves the capture or death of Peck. Overjoyed at seeing justice done to the monster who has terrorized them for so long, the city guard and local nobles happily reward the PCs, who should now find many doors opened to them among the upper classes. The Chartsheim and Knots families also both pay an additional 500 gp to the party for the recovery of their lost children. If Auraluna survives and retains her freedom, however, it might only be a matter of time before she finds another patsy and the killings begin again.

If Auraluna is implicated in the murders, she lives out her few remaining years in a local asylum and likely no longer proves a threat. What result this has on Ceseli, however, proves a far greater question. Perhaps the girl, unburdened by her hateful mother, restores the prestige of the Dromdal name, or maybe she simply lives out her life quietly. Alternatively, the revelation of Auraluna's torturous acts might be just enough to unhinge the already shaken girl, leading her to take up the same bloody work as her mother. The further successes or infamies of the Dromdal family are left up to the DM to determine.

F. Wesley Schneider is an assistant editor for DRAGON. *He swears his grandmother's home looks nothing like Dromdal House.*

James Lafond Sutter was born via a plunger to the head, which explains quite a lot. In the 21 years since, James has been a gigging punk rocker, a radio DJ, a male model, an editor of an erotica magazine and the SHACKLED CITY *Adventure Path, and a contestant on Wheel of Fortune. In his spare time, he's published more than a hundred sometimes-award-winning articles and short stories in various newspapers and magazines. He currently works for Paizo Publishing, and swears that the length of this bio isn't compensating for anything.*



Joachim

AGE OF WORMS

The Champion's Belt

The Champion's Games are here! This annual event, organized and produced by well-known and well-liked public figure Loris Raknian, has long been a much-beloved tradition in the Free City. Gladiators come from distant lands to participate in the games, and the winner gains the honor of wearing the Champion's Belt for the next year, when he must defend his title from all challengers. Yet this year, something dire festers in the arena's foundations, for its director plots one of the final omens heralding the Age of Worms.

"The Champion's Belt" is a DUNGEONS & DRAGONS adventure designed for four 9th-level characters. It is also the fifth installment of the Age of Worms Adventure Path, a complete campaign consisting of 12 adventures, several "Backdrop" articles to help Dungeon Masters run the series, and a handful of poster maps of key locations. For additional aid in running this campaign, check out *DRAGON*'s monthly "Wormfood" articles, a series that provides additional material to help players survive this campaign. Your PCs should hit 10th level at some point in this adventure, and if they need a place to spend their winnings from participating in the Champion's Games, check out issue #337 of *DRAGON* for guidelines on what they can purchase in the Free City.

Of course, you can also run "The Champion's Belt" as a stand-alone adventure, or even as a part of a campaign of your own design.

Adventure Background

Twelve years ago, the mighty gladiator Loris Raknian retired after a brilliant career in the Free City Arena. He used his influence to gain control of the arena, became a manager for promising gladiators, and invested most of the wealth he had amassed thus far in successful business activities. Today, Raknian's star is ascendant. He is well-loved by the citizens of the Free City, and his creation of the Champion's Games has created a solid flow of income into the city's coffers since its inception. This year's games mark the 10-year anniversary of their creation, and Raknian has promised the Free City an event that even the gods themselves will remember.

Yet in spite of his success and fame, the ageing Raknian has lived every day since his retirement in fear. Fear of death. His narcissistic personality could not tolerate the inevitable decline of his mortal body, and as the once indomitable gladiator of a thousand fights watched his hair turn gray and felt his bones begin to ache, he realized time was the only opponent he could not beat. Raknian secretly grew more and more jealous of the impudent, ambitious young gladiators who fought for glory in his arena. Yet he dared not endanger his public image, so he kept his jealousy well hidden. Over the years, this jealousy festered and ate at him from within. Raknian began to use his vast resources to search for a method to restore his vigor

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ADVENTURE PATH | MID-LEVEL (6TH-12TH) | URBAN & DUNGEON CRAWL

and youth, but as one solution after the other proved false, his fear continued to grow. He turned to questionable allies and sinister sources as less distasteful methods of preserving his youth failed. He formed a close friendship with a cleric of Hextor named Theldrick during these during these dark times, and eventually became a hidden financial support of the Ebon Triad, Theldrick's heretical cult. In return for Raknian's donations, Theldrick put the aging gladiator in contact with a mysterious cleric the Ebon Triad had gone to for advice before. This was the sinister tiefling Bozal Zahol.

Bozal Zahol spoke of secret rituals and potent prayers that, if offered to his mysterious god, could halt the aging process. Bozal explained that his deity held the keys to decay, and only he could exempt a human from old age. Raknian was naturally suspicious, and when Bozal Zahol wouldn't offer him proof or reveal the name of his god, Raknian had the cleric escorted from his palace—but not before accepting a small magic token that would allow Raknian to contact Bozal if (when) he changed his mind. That would have been the end of the story, if not for a young woman named Lahaka.

Raknian kept many lovers and consorts over the years; as a man of wealth and power, he never lacked for companionship. Lahaka was an intriguing, exotic jewel from the distant south, and she caught Raknian's eye two years ago. He took her as his lover, and for a year they were happy. Yet Lahaka grew tired of Raknian's ego and self-importance, and when a young gladiator named Auric won the Champion's Games for the second year in a row, she made no secret of her admiration for the youthful, handsome warrior. When Raknian confronted her about this, she spurned him and said he had grown too old to satisfy her. In the grip of rage, Raknian strangled Lahaka. It was in this state of anger, madness, and morbid depression that Raknian called upon Bozal and told him he was willing to accept his wisdom in return for escape from the horrors of old age.

With the cleric's aid, the distraught Raknian was able to hush up Lahaka's murder and dispose of her body. Soon, her disappearance was forgotten. The director of the Free City Arena refrained from seeing other women and focused on his office. In his off hours, he spent much of his time with Bozal, learning more with each passing night of Bozal's god Kyuss and his dark promises. Raknian was intrigued by Bozal's words, recognizing many similar themes to the teachings of his old belief in the Ebon Triad. Yet Bozal's words seemed strangely more potent to Raknian. The two began to secretly prepare the ritual to mark Raknian as a favorite of Kyuss, since escape from decay was a favor granted only to his most devout worshippers. Such an unholy miracle also required a massive sacrifice performed by one of the Apostles of Kyuss and involving the "Blood of a Champion."

Raknian is now firmly in Bozal's clutches. The two have chosen this year's Champion's Games as the altar for their sacrifice to Kyuss, as Raknian has come to believe that the gladiators scheme against him and wait eagerly for his demise so one of them can replace him as the younger, more handsome director of the Free City Arena. One gladiator in particular, the fighter Auric, has become synonymous with Raknian's paranoia, and if all goes according to plan, it will be Auric's blood that anoints the Apostle of Kyuss on the eve of the final game.

Raknian's recent discovery of the destruction of the Ebon Triad cell in Diamond Lake (along with the loss of his old friend Theldrick) concerns the old gladiator greatly. What if these adventurers discovered the link between him and Theldrick? Raknian took no chances, and in the previous adventure tried to have the PCs killed.

Adventure Synopsis

"The Champion's Belt" allows the PCs to participate in the Champion's Games, and gives them a chance to prevent the sacrifice to Kyuss scheduled for the last day of the celebration. Further, it gives them a chance to defeat Raknian, whom they learned at the end of the previous adventure, "The Hall of Harsh Reflections," had paid for their assassinations. Yet Raknian is a well-loved public official, and as such he is difficult to reach.

The answer comes from a beautiful and mysterious woman named Celeste. She puts the PCs in contact with one of her friends, a bard named Ekaym Smallcask who is seeking a band of gladiators to sponsor in the Games. Ekaym has a hidden motive for his gladiators, for it was his sister Lahaka who went missing months ago in the arena. He hopes that the PCs get a chance to explore the chambers below the arena in between their public fights and discover what happened to his sister.

As participants to the tournament, the PCs must spend several days in the arena understructure, where they also have a chance to discover the Apostle of Kyuss and prevent its terrifying rise. During the day, they must battle other gladiators in the arena to reach the final, fateful match of the Champion's Games.

Adventure Hooks

"The Champion's Belt" is meant to serve as an episode of the Age of Worms Adventure Path. If you have played through the previous four installments of the adventure path, the heroes suspect that Loris Raknian is an associate of the Ebon Triad, as he attempted an assassination against them. Raknian is a very powerful figure in the Free City, and is also very popular in his role of director of the arena. This means that the heroes have little hope to turn the authorities against him in a short time, even with the evidence from the mind flayer's ledger from "The Hall of Harsh Reflections." Raknian is reluctant to take direct action against the heroes at this time as he is very busy with his office and his dark schemes. If the heroes accept Celeste's suggestion to enroll in the Champion's Games, the director of the arena actually sees this fact as an opportunity to get rid of them, and eagerly observes the PCs as they make their way to the last round of the tournament.

This adventure serves well outside the context of the Age of Worms Adventure Path for any city with a gladiatorial arena and a party in need of an infusion of cash. In this case, the subplot of discovering what happened to Ekyam's sister becomes the primary plot of the adventure.

In any event, the one thing the PCs need to know about before starting this adventure is that Loris Raknian recently purchased an item called the *Apostolic Scrolls* from a disreputable source.

If you've played "The Hall of Harsh Reflections" the PCs probably learned this by investigating Zyrxog's ledger. Otherwise, you should have the PCs discover this information in a prior adventure, perhaps in the form of a receipt in a smuggler's den.

PART ONE: AN OPPORTUNITY FOR VIOLENCE

Give the PCs time to recover from their battles against Zyrxog the mind flayer before starting this adventure. The PCs are probably itching to confront Loris Raknian or considering the wisdom of skipping town, but give them some time to talk over their plans. At some point before they take matters into their own hands or flee town, they receive word from Eligos that he's got some information for them about their discoveries in Diamond Lake, and invites them to dinner at his house in the Garden District of the Free City.

Eligos's house is a white marble manor. The interior is equally ostentatious and impressive. A more detailed description of his manor appears in "The Hall of Harsh Reflections," in *Dungeon* #127.

When the PCs arrive, they are shown into the parlor by Eligos's aged elven manservant **Pollard** (N male elf expert 2). **Eligos** (LN male human fighter 2/wizard 7/loremaster 2) is already waiting for them, seated in a tall, velvet-upholstered chair. Several other chairs sit in the room (one for each PC), arrayed around a low table set with several tantalizing dishes. Eligos rises as the PCs enter the room.

"Good evening, my friends! I trust you brought your appetites? I tend to eat dinner as I get the chance, and I hope this somewhat informal repast doesn't offend you. Good, I thought not. In any event, let's eat—after dinner, I'll tell you what I've learned of your little green worms."

The dinner itself should be pleasant and idle, with Eligos asking the PCs to recount tales of their adventures up to this point. When dinner is over, he takes the various items and notes that the PCs had given him to research and begins telling them what he's learned.

Some of the items the PCs give Eligos (Zosiel's silver diadem, the two demon horns, and the inactive *talisman of the sphere*) have nothing to do with the Age of Worms. Eligos can tell them some tidbits of information (the horns once belonged to a fiend named Kizarvidexus who was slain by a wind duke named Icosiol, for example), but the true finds are: the preserved Kyuss worm, the slow worm tainted potions, Theldrick's journal, Grallak Kur's encrypted scribblings, and news of infested dragon eggs. You should roleplay the sage's lecture to the PCs, but make sure he conveys the following key pieces of information before ending the encounter.

- All of these clues point to the involvement of a minor deity of the creation and mastery of undead called Kyuss.
- The worm-infested undead are the most notorious (and the least dangerous) of Kyuss' spawn. Their presence in the region, combined with the discovery of the various worms, indicates that the cult of Kyuss is certainly becoming more active in the area. Spawn of Kyuss are especially dangerous in that they are horrifically fecund.
- The cult of Kyuss has traditionally been small, often consisting of single priests who live double lives as upstanding citizens. Recent evidence suggests that the Ebon Triad may have involved the smaller (but older) cult of Kyuss in its schemes. Eligos suspects some dark purpose behind this sinister alliance, possibly related to the coming Age of Worms.
- Tales of the Age of Worms itself are as old as anything. Often known by other names (the End Times, The Dark Age, and the Eternal Ruin among others), the Age of Worms is an ancient set of prophecies that speak of a transformation of the world, of a time when life gives way to something else. These prophecies are recorded in certain rare texts like the *Book of Vile Darkness*, *Libris Mortis*, the *Necronomicon*, and the *Apostolic Scrolls*, and are inscribed on the walls of ancient ruins across the world. Many cults and soothsayers have developed their own theories about the Age of Worms, but Eligos has never seen so many references to it from so many different sources as the information the PCs provide him. Something is certainly building.

If the PCs don't mention Loris Raknian's purchase of the *Apostolic Scrolls* on their own, they'll certainly be moved to do so when Eligos mentions them. Upon finding out that these fabulously rare scrolls are in town, and worse, that someone as important as Loris Raknian has purchased them, Eligos's countenance turns dark. He can tell the PCs little about the *Apostolic Scrolls* save that they are reputed to have been penned by Kyuss himself and detail the creation of the ulgurstasta. These massive undead creatures are capable of consuming the living and regurgitating them as undead. The *Apostolic Scrolls* are said to contain rituals that allow an ulgurstasta to create even more powerful undead, spewing them out at a tremendous rate.

As their meeting draws to a close, Eligos recommends that the PCs investigate Loris Raknian and his unsettling interest in the *Apostolic Scrolls*. If the PCs tell him that Raknian's already tried to have them killed, Eligos nods and observes that this just further damns the director of the Free City Arena. Obviously, he learned of the PCs' actions in Diamond Lake and took matters into his own hands. Eligos recommends caution; Raknian is a powerful man and remains quite popular with the city government. Any direct confrontation would only reveal to him the extent of the PCs' knowledge, and force him to cash in a few of the numerous favors the city government owes him. A wiser course of action would be to infiltrate the arena itself and find more concrete evidence that Raknian's up to no good. If the PCs can find proof that he means ill will to the Free City itself, they'll have no problems convincing the government to help. And if they can recover the *Apostolic Scrolls* (and find out what Raknian intends to do with them) while they're at it, so much the better.

Raknian obviously knows who the PCs are, and normally this would make it difficult for them to get into the arena to investigate the director. Fortunately, the Champion's Games are starting in a few short days, and Raknian doubtless has much else on his

mind. In fact, Eligos says he might have just the opportunity the PCs are looking for. He tells them that one of his friends came to him just yesterday, seeking a group of heroes to enter the Champion's Games. What better way to sneak into the arena than under the guise of gladiators? Eligos promises the PCs that he will put his friend, a woman named Celeste, in contact with them as soon as possible. Until then, they should rest and recover from their adventures.

Meeting Celeste

Give the PCs time to recover from their previous adventures and perhaps make a few magic items or explore the surrounding neighborhood. Refer to the "Backdrop: The Free City" article in this issue of DUNGEON for inspiration. Eventually, a day or two before the Champion's Games are set to begin, the PCs are visited at the Crooked House (or wherever they may be staying in the city) by Celeste, a beautiful human woman who is more than she seems (see the sidebar "A Familiar Face").

Celeste

Celeste (CG female ghaele eladrin bard 4) is accompanied by a handsome but rather short fellow in his late thirties who wears a fine blue robe, polished knee-high boots, and carries a lute slung on the shoulder. This is her close friend **Ekaym Smallcask** (NG male human fighter 3/bard 4/high handcrafter 3), a member of a secret society of merchants known as the Chisel. Ekaym's stats are not presented here as he is unlikely to get into combat—he possesses levels in a specialized prestige class called the high handcrafter which is detailed in the Shackled City Adventure Path.

After introductions, Celeste says that her friend Eligos told her that the PCs are seeking a sponsor for the Champion's Games. She suspects that they may have their own reasons for wanting to get into the arena, but trusts Eligos enough that she doesn't need to know the details. All that concerns her is that the PCs come highly recommended by the sage and should be able to help her friend Ekaym.

Celeste informs the PCs that all participants in the Champion's Games must fight for a licensed manager. These licenses are difficult to come by, but fortunately for the PCs Ekaym happens to posses just such a license but has no gladiators to fight for him. Ekaym is a visiting merchant from the distant south, in the Free City for an extended period. He asked Celeste for help in recruiting some gladiators.

A little flamboyant and loud, Ekaym is still a likable-enough fellow. He seems to be up front about his interest in the Champion's Games—managing a successful group of gladiators is a great way to make a lot of money and meet a lot of women. If the PCs tell him about their personal goals in the arena, he cuts them off before they get too far into it. As long as their antics don't jeopardize their fights, he doesn't care what the PCs are up to.

Of course, Ekaym has another, deeper motivation—his older sister was Lahaka, the woman Raknian secretly murdered a year ago. An entertainer of some fame, Lahaka's disappearance has tormented Ekaym for months and only recently has he managed to track down her last-known location, as one of Raknian's favored consorts. Arriving at the Free City a few weeks ago, Ekaym found out about the Champion's Games and purchased a manager's license at great expense on the Free City black market. He's found that recruiting a competent, trustworthy group of "gladiators" is a more difficult prospect, and turned to Celeste for aid. He hopes that the PCs

A Familiar Face (sort of)

Players and DMs who have been through the Shackled City Adventure Path no doubt remember Celeste from that campaign, in which she was investigating rumors of a dangerous cult hidden in the city of Cauldron at the request of her master, the archmage Manzorian. Celeste serves Manzorian as a diplomat and a spy in regions as close as the Free City or as distant as Cauldron. When on mission, she typically adopts a disguise (using *disguise self*) to allow her to more handily blend in with her targets. In the Shackled City Adventure Path, she was investigating rumors of corruption in the nobility and adopted the guise of a visiting noble woman. In the Age of Worms, her quarry is seedier—she's investigating a smuggling network that may be connected to a notorious band of slavers to the south. As such, she's adopted the guise of a rough and ready rogue. When speaking to the PCs, though, she allows her true personality to shine through—that of a good-natured and funny woman who values friendship greatly.

If a PC uses *true seeing* or other means to penetrate her disguise, they see Celeste in her true form—that of a beautiful elven woman that radiates light. Celeste is a ghaele eladrin bard 4; her statistics are not presented here, as she has other matters to attend and doesn't have time to directly aid the PCs.

snoop around the arena and find out what may have happened to his sister.

Assuming the PCs are interested in becoming gladiators, Ekaym shakes their hands and offers to buy them dinner while he goes over the competition's rules. Celeste takes her leave of the party, but as she does she says that if they do well in the games, she may have need of their services again in the future.

Ekaym initially asks for 50% of the tournament winnings, but a Diplomacy check can reduce his share. With a DC 15 Diplomacy check, he agrees to lower his share to 30% of the total winnings. With a DC 30 Diplomacy check, he agrees that splitting the winnings evenly between himself and all of the PCs is acceptable. Once the deal is set, the PCs must sign their names to his gladiator license. He tells them they may spend the next few days as they wish, but that they must be at the Free Dinner at no later than 6:00 PM the evening before the games begin or they'll be disqualified before they start.

PART TWO: THE CHAMPION'S GAMES

The Champion's Games is a five-day-long gladiatorial tournament that takes place annually in the Free City Arena. The games themselves consist of a massive four-round elimination event, interspersed with spectacle fights that pit gladiators against exotic monsters and other unique foes. A single team can consist of no more than eight members. Familiars do not count as members, but larger animal companions, mounts, and cohorts do. Finally, each team of gladiators must identify itself with a name and designate a leader.

The tournament is fought in four successive rounds of elimination. The first round consists of six battles of free-for-all combat between groups of four teams. The second day is for resting and recuperating. The six winners of the first round of battles are paired off into

Ekaym Smallcask

Chaos Wasteland

http://chaos-wasteland.dyndns.org:6969/

RPG BIT-TORRENT TRACKER

SCAN REQUESTS

Official D&D
- Heroes of Horror
- Hellspike Prison
- Spell Compendium
- Dungeon Magazine #126

d20 Sword & Sorcery
- Advanced Player's Guide

d20 Sovereign Press
- Towers of High Sorcery
- War of the Lance
- Holy Orders of the Stars
- Legends of the Twins
- Spectre of Sorrows

Champion's Games Timeline

Day 0, 6:00 PM: Event 1—The Free Dinner
Day 0, 8:00 PM: Event 2—Into the Coenoby
Day 1, 10:00 AM: Event 3—First Battle
Anytime after Event 3: Event 4—Ekaym's Request
Day 3, 2:00 PM: Event 5—Second Battle
Day 4, 12:00 PM: Event 6—Madtooth the Hungry
Day 5, 12:00 PM: Event 7—Final Battle

Champion's Prizes

Prizes are awarded after each fight. Loris Raknian personally hands over the trophy and the cash prize to the gladiator team's manager up in the stands, while the winning gladiator team gets a few moments to bask in the glory of their win before the crowd before they are escorted back to area **H** and thence back to the Coenoby. Traditionally, the team's leader keeps any trophies and splits the cash payout with the gladiators.

The prizes for each day break down as follows.

Day 1: Winning teams of the first round recieve a bronze trophy depicting a bull (worth 100 gp) and a cash payout of 2,000 gp.

Day 2: No fights occur on this day. The winning teams can rest and relax in the Coenoby while the arena above is utilized for games, demonstrations of magic, and non-tournament mock battles.

Day 3: Winning teams of the second round recieve a silver trophy depicting a dwarf gladiator (worth 500 gp) and a cash payout of 5,000 gp.

Day 4: Winning teams of the third round recieve a gold trophy depicting a human gladiator (worth 1,000 gp) and a cash payout of 10,000 gp.

Day 5: The winner of the Champion's Games wins the right to wear the Champion's Belt (worth 2,000 gp) for a year, along with a cash payout of 20,000 gp.

We Won't Play Gladiator!

If the PCs don't want to prove themselves in the Champion's Games, don't push them to become gladiators, since they'll probably resent your attempt at railroading. Make it clear, however, that the decision to not take part in the tournament cannot be reconsidered once the Games have begun.

The PCs can still watch the Champion's Games as spectators. The PCs can still place bets on gladiators involved in the Champion's Games with the local bookmakers.

Although the PCs will miss the excitement of the arena battles, they must still plan their infiltration of the arena substructure. Penetrating this area from outside is a difficult task, for Raknian's guards are constantly stationed at every entrance and don't allow just anyone to enter. A DC 40 Diplomacy check is good enough to convince the guards to let the PCs in (or a DC 25 Diplomacy check, along with a bribe of at least 500 gp). Reaching the understructure without risking a major fight with Raknian's troops is impossible, and alternative ways require appropriate magic and/or skill.

A safer way to reach the understructure is via *dimension door* or *teleport*, but the use of these spells is limited by the party's knowledge of their destination. Any ex-participant of the tournament (DC 20 Gather Information to locate) can supply the necessary information about the Coenoby and other locations he visited.

As a last resort, the PCs can make a DC 25 Gather Information check to learn of rumors that a secret passage somewhere in town leads to the old tunnels that run under the arena foundations. This passage eventually connects to the Service Level of the undestructure (**area 15**). The location of the secret passage is up to you, and finding/using it can be an interesting side trek in the Free City.

three team-versus-team battles on the third day. On the fourth day, two of the three remaining teams fight each other, while the third team fights a special exhibition match against an exotic monster. The fourth and final round is a face-to-face battle between the two remaining teams on the fifth day. As a general rule, the team that fought the monster the day before tends to have a slight advantage over the other team, since the monster fight usually ends up consuming fewer resources than a full-on battle against another team of gladiators. The winner of each round is awarded a generous prize to be shared among the team members and their manager.

The first day of the Champion's Games begins with the Free Dinner, a sumptuous outdoor banquet held on the battleground of the arena itself at sundown. The Free Dinner involves hundreds of people and is open to Loris Raknian and his retinue, the licensed managers, the gladiators, and the most affluent among the Free City's nobility. Wagers are placed as the nobles have the opportunity to meet the gladiators and evaluate their might and commeasure the first bets.

After the Free Dinner, the gladiators are escorted to a huge underground cave below the arena. This is the Coenoby (pronounced see-no-bie), and it is home for the gladiators until their elimination from the competition or the end of the Games. During the time the gladiators are confined to the Coenoby, they are allowed meetings with their managers every other day. Any team not responding to a fight's roll call or found guilty of violating any rules of the tournament is immediately disqualified and expelled from the Coenoby by Raknian's elite guards.

The Arena Grounds

The Free City Arena stands on a hillock in the northern part of the Free City. During his time as director, Loris Raknian has purchased many of the buildings surrounding the arena, and has seen to the renovation of the ancient structure's watchtowers, creating an effective safety cordon around the arena itself. Raknian built a large barracks for his guards into a section of the arena terraces and has chosen a nearby building as his personal residence, expanding it and connecting it to the arena's main tribune (see the Arena Grounds map).

The arena can seat 18,000 spectators if they squeeze, but the Champion's Games usually draws (still respectable) crowds of about 10,000. Seating occurs in 12 banks of 1,500 seats each. All the seats offer splendid views of the field. During the Champion's Games, there are three types of seats for sale. The majority of the seats are high in the tiers and sell for 1 sp per day. The lower seats closest to the action sell for 1 gp a day. The 500 most expensive seats are situated in the section nearest Raknian's palace. These seats are cushioned, shaded, and well-staffed by vendors; they sell for 50 gp a day.

During the day, the main gates of the arena are open to the public, and everyone

can watch workers prepare the arena for the games. As the Champion's Games become imminent, carpenters, smiths and stage workers work feverishly to get everything ready. As they toil, a robed figure supervises them—this is **Talabir Welik** (N male human wizard 7), the tournament's referee. A neutral wizard and totally extraneous to Raknian's evildoing, Talabir is concerned primarily with making sure the games themselves run smoothly. He takes his responsibility as referee of the Champion's Games very seriously, and follows the rules literally. Welik's toad familiar, Dreemik, spends most of the time dozing in the wizard's coin pouch, pretending to be a dragon sleeping on his hoard.

The following brief descriptions apply to the map of the Free City Arena.

A. These watchtowers are all manned by four **Arena Wardens** (human warrior 2) during games. Their primary purpose is to add ambience to the proceedings, but in the case a fight gets out of control and spills into the crowd they are expected to do what they can to contain panic.

B. A passage in the basement of the Warden's Barracks leads to the Service Level (area **1**). This entrance is used by guards who patrol the Service Level, as well as visitors to the lower levels (such as gladiator managers).

C. A passage from Raknian's Pavilion leads to the Service Level (area **5**); this entrance is used by servants who work in the Service Level.

D. The entrance to this hidden passage in the wall of one of Raknian's wine cellars can be found with a DC 25 Search check. It leads to the Shrine of Kyuss (area **30**).

E. This passage leads from the ground floor of Raknian's Palace to area **5** of the Service Level. This entrance is the one Raknian and his guests use when visiting the Service Level.

F. This 15-foot-deep, 2-foot-wide chimney leads to the Coenoby kitchen (area **17**). The chimney top has an iron grate over the top (hardness 8, hp 30, Break DC 28). A DC 15 Climb check is required to navigate the chimney.

G. This 3-foot-wide maintenance manhole leads to the sewer system that can eventually lead the PCs to the sewer collector room under the arena (area **22**).

H. This is a lift to area **1** of the Service Level. This is the entrance that gladiators use to enter and exit the arena.

Loris Raknian

Loris Raknian often wanders the arena grounds during daylight hours, supervising the work or rebuking some hapless laborer. The director of the arena always appears fully armed and accompanied by a group of his bodyguards. Raknian encounters the PCs numerous times during the adventure, so his statistics are presented here.

Loris Raknian is a tall, heavily muscled man in his early 50s. Famous for his great strength, Raknian remains an exceptionally hardy man today. He has short grizzled hair, a strong jaw, and small gray eyes.

Loris Raknian CR 13
Male human fighter 13
LE Medium humanoid
Init +4; **Senses** Listen –1, Spot –1
Languages Common

AC 22, touch 12, flat-footed 22
hp 102 (13 HD)
Fort +10, **Ref** +4, **Will** +5

Spd 20 ft.
Melee *+1 mighty cleaving bastard sword* +19/+14/+9 (1d10+6/17–20)
Ranged mwk dagger +14 (1d4+3/19–20)
Base Atk +13; **Grp** +16
Atk Options Cleave, Improved Bull Rush, Power Attack
Combat Gear *potion of cure serious wounds*

Abilities Str 16, Dex 11, Con 14, Int 11, Wis 9, Cha 16
Feats Athletic[B], Cleave[B], Exotic Weapon Proficiency (bastard sword)[B], Greater Weapon Focus (bastard sword)[B], Improved Bull Rush, Improved Critical (bastard sword)[B], Improved Initiative, Iron Will, Leadership, Power

Attack[B], Toughness, Weapon Focus (bastard sword)[B], Weapon Specialization (bastard sword)[B]

Skills Climb +18, Handle Animal +13, Intimidate +13, Jump +4, Ride +10, Swim –3

Possessions combat gear, *breastplate of command, +2 buckler, +1 mighty cleaving bastard sword*, 3 masterwork daggers, *cloak of Charisma +2, ring of protection +2* (shaped like coiling serpents)

Raknian's Security

Raknian employs a small army of guards, including an elite group of ex-gladiators and ex-adventurers for the arena's security. These guards are well paid, but their loyalty to Raknian is equally inspired by the director's legendary lack of mercy when dealing with incompetence, insubordination, and sloth.

The majority of Raknian's guards are the **Arena Wardens**, 2nd-level human warriors armed with short bows and shortspears and clad in studded leather armor. These guards reside in the Warden's Barracks and patrol the arena grounds, man the watchtowers, and guard the outlying buildings. They wear blue cloaks with large clasps shaped like Raknian's bastard sword.

During big events like the Champion's Games, the wardens are augmented by a number of **Pouncers** (human commoner 2) hired by Raknian for crowd-control purposes on the arena terraces. The pouncers are unarmored humans or half-orcs armed with clubs, and are active only during daylight hours. They are recognizable only for their blue tabards. Pouncers patrol in pairs, and report to the warden sergeants stationed in the watchtowers.

Raknian's 30 personal guards, the cream of his forces, reside in the Bodyguards' Barracks and are under the direct command of Raknian's trusted cohort, Okoral. These bodyguards wear distinctive purple cloaks and are charged with three directives: protect Raknian from direct attacks, respond to alarms raised in Raknian's Palace or the arena understructure, and patrol the Service Level of the understructure after hours.

While these bodyguards are loyal, they do not share Raknian's cruelty, nor do they know the full story behind his personal escapades. The same does not hold true for Captain Okoral. Okoral is a middle-aged and quite skilled assassin with a powerful yet lithe figure. He is tanned, clean-shaven and sports a thick crew cut, and looks younger than his age. He is rarely seen with Raknian in public, but has periodic meetings with him to discuss questions of security and intelligence. When Raknian needs something shady handled, and he can't trust the matter to outside agents (such as the mind flayer Zyrxog), he turns to Okoral.

Loris Raknian

Captain Okoral **CR 10**

Male human rogue 3/fighter 4/assassin 3

LE Medium humanoid

Init +7; **Senses** Listen +10, Spot +10

Languages Common, Draconic, Infernal

AC 20, touch 14, flat-footed 17; Dodge, uncanny dodge

hp 45 (10 HD)

Fort +6 (+7 vs poison), **Ref** +10, **Will** +2

Spd 30 ft.

Melee *+1 wounding short sword* +13/+8 (1d6+4 plus wounding) or *+1 wounding short sword* +11/+6 (1d6+4 plus wounding) and *+1 short sword* +11/+6 (1d6+3)

Ranged mwk light crossbow +12 (1d8/19–20)

Base Atk +8; **Grp** +9

Atk Options sneak attack +4d6

Special Atk death attack (DC 15)

Combat Gear *potion of cure moderate wounds, potion of haste, potion of resist fire 10*, 8 doses of blue whinnis poison, 2 doses of purple worm poison

Spells Prepared (CL 3rd):

2nd (1/day)—*cat's grace, invisibility*

1st (3/day)—*disguise self, feather fall, true strike*

Abilities Str 13, Dex 17, Con 10, Int 14, Wis 8, Cha 12

SQ poison use, trapfinding, trap sense +1

Feats Alertness[B], Dodge, Improved Initiative, Improved Two-Weapon Fighting, Two-Weapon Fighting, Weapon Finesse[B], Weapon Focus (short sword)[B], Weapon Specialization (short sword)[B]

Skills Balance +4, Bluff +10, Climb +6, Disable Device +8, Diplomacy +3, Disguise +7 (+9 acting), Gather Information +7, Hide +13, Intimidate +7, Jump +2, Listen +10, Move Silently +13, Open Lock +9, Search +8, Sleight of Hand +8, Spot +10, Tumble +8

Possessions combat gear, *+2 chain shirt, +1 wounding short sword, +1 shortsword*, masterwork light crossbow with 20 bolts, *ring of protection +1*

Bodyguard **CR 5**

Human fighter 5

LN Medium Humanoid

Init +1; **Senses** Listen +1, Spot +1

Languages Common

AC 18, touch 11, flat-footed 17

hp 42 (5 HD)

Fort +6, **Ref** +2, **Will** +4

Spd 20 ft.

Melee mwk longsword +10 (1d8+5/19–20)

Ranged mwk light crossbow +7 (1d8/19–20)

Base Atk +5; **Grp** +8

Atk Options Improved Bull Rush, Improved Sunder, Power Attack

Combat Gear *potion of cure moderate wounds (2), potion of fly*

Abilities Str 16, Dex 13, Con 14, Int 10, Wis 12, Cha 8
Feats Improved Bull Rush, Improved Sunder[B], Iron Will[B], Power Attack, Weapon Focus (longsword)[B], Weapon Specialization (longsword)[B]
Skills Climb +8, Intimidate +7, Ride +9
Possessions combat gear, masterwork breastplate, *+1 buckler*, masterwork longsword, masterwork light crossbow with 10 bolts, masterwork manacles

Event 1: The Free Dinner

The Free Dinner that precedes the Champion's Games is a spectacular event, with more than 200 guests and half again as many servants, cooks, musicians, and other entertainers. The event itself takes place under the open sky on the arena battleground. Numerous long banquet tables are arrayed in a circle around a central wooden stage that gives entertainers a place to perform. The entire area is festooned with flowers, ribbons, and multicolored pennants. The arena gates open for the event at 5:00 PM, and a patrol of Raknian's wardens takes position before each one, checking invitations and keeping an eye on the situation. Two great bonfires burn north of the seating area, and scores of cooks, scullions, and waiters are busy there with spits, grills, and platters.

When the PCs and Ekaym arrive, Ekaym presents his license and a clerk records the PCs' names, the name of their group, and takes a note on the group's leader. After being admitted, the PCs are shown their table and servants soon provide plenty of delicious food and drink. The arena fills quickly with guests and attendants, and shortly before 6:00, Raknian enters the arena with his retinue (Captain Okoral, Talabir, and six bodyguards) and the crowd greets him with thunderous applause. Raknian is quick on the pleasantries, and sits at a prominent table between the central bonfire and the stage. The current holder of the Champion's Belt, the gladiator Auric, and his teammate Khellek also sit at Raknian's table. When Raknian presents Auric to the crowd, he is greeted with even more applause.

Next, Talabir takes the stage and runs down the specific rules for arena combat. The rules are encapsulated in the Rules of Battle sidebar on page 41. You can roleplay Talabir's speach, or you can simply provide a copy of these rules on paper for the PCs as you see fit.

After the rules are explained, Loris Raknian takes the stage again and declares all gladiators "Champions of the Free City" for the duration of the Games (more applause), and then signals for the Free Dinner to begin. Several bards take the stage and begin performing as servants carry huge platters of food out to the various tables. Several events can take place during the dinner, as detailed below.

Placing Wagers: Although a team's manager is typically the one responsible for any public relations work during the banquet, the PCs can easily become involved in discussions about the Games or their own skills. Bookkeepers, merchants, and noblemen, all seeking the best odds on wagers, take advantage of their invitation to the Free Dinner to interview the gladiators. Several certainly want to have a word with the PCs about their strengths and weaknesses, giving the characters a chance to brag about their past exploits. As untested newcomers, the PCs' group has fairly high odds. Gladiators are allowed (and often encouraged) to place bets on themselves or other teams, but must arrange for payment

FULL FRONTAL NERDITY by Aaron Williams
WAIT... YOU DO WHAT, NOW?
I TOLD YOU. I PUT THE MIXTURE OF CHARCOAL, SULFUR AND SALTPETER UNDER THE LICH-QUEEN'S SARCOPHAGUS, AND WITH A RAG SOAKED IN OIL, I--
HANG ON. THAT'S GUNPOWDER! I DON'T ALLOW THAT IN MY CAMPAIGN!
WHAT, SIMPLE PHYSICS AND CHEMISTRY AREN'T ALLOWED? I'M AMAZED MY TORCH WORKS, THEN!
THIS IS A FANTASY CAMPAIGN! PHYSICS ARE DISCRETIONARY! BESIDES WHICH, I SINCERELY DOUBT YOUR CHARACTER WOULD BE CAPABLE OF INVENTING GUNPOWDER!
HEY, THE CHINESE DISCOVERED IT AROUND 1100 AD, SO WHY NOT BY ME?
FOR STARTERS, YOU'RE A HALF-ORC BARBARIAN WITH AN INTELLIGENCE OF SIX...
MUST WE GO THROUGH THIS EVERY TIME YOU SEE THE "STAR TREK" EPISODE WHERE KIRK FIGHTS THE GORN?
http://www.nodwick.com
WITH THAT LAST BLOW, THE DEMI-GOD KRUTHAN FALLS TO ONE KNEE, CLUTCHING HIS CHEST AND COUGHING UP ICHOR!
AWRIGHT! I STILL HAVE THREE HIT POINTS LEFT! I FINISH HIM OFF!
BEFORE HE DOES, I HIT HIS CHARACTER FROM BEHIND WITH MY MACE OF PAIN!
YOU CAN'T! YOU'RE PLAYING A LAWFUL GOOD CLERIC!
I NOW ASK THE GM TO OPEN THE ENVELOPE I GAVE HIM LAST WEEK. NOTE THAT IT'S POSTMARKED THREE WEEKS AGO WHEN WE STARTED THIS GAME.
"THIS NOTE HEREBY CERTIFIES THAT WHILE LUORTHO THE CLERIC HAS ONLY PRETENDED TO BE LAWFUL GOOD, HE IS REALLY THE CHAOTIC EVIL SERVANT OF KRUTHAN. FOR DELIVERING HIS ENEMIES TO KRUTHAN, LUORTHO WILL BE REWARDED BY ROLLING ON TABLE FIVE OF THE 'FAVORS TO GREATER BEINGS' TABLE."
WOW. IT'S EVEN NOTARIZED!
WORDS FAIL TO DESCRIBE THE MYRIAD WAYS YOU SUCK.
I THINK I'LL ANIMATE YOUR CORPSE. I'M GOING TO NEED A TOWEL BOY...

Gladiator Ranks

Gladiator rank determines the payout you get when a team you bet on wins a match. A team's rank increases as they achieve success in the games in one of three ways:

- Each time a team wins a competition, its rank increases by +1.
- A successful Bluff check made during the Free Dinner can reduce or increase a team's rank by 1.
- Each time a team member scores a critical hit on an enemy gladiator, there's a 25% chance the team's rank increases by +1.

Gladiator Rank	Payout	Bluff DC to Alter
1 (minimum)	1 gp pays 10 gp	40
2	1 gp pays 5 gp	30
3 (initial PC rank)	1 gp pays 3 gp	25
4	1 gp pays 2 gp	20
5	1 gp pays 1 gp	15
6	2 gp pays 1 gp	20
7	3 gp pays 1 gp	25
8	5 gp pays 1 gp	30
9 (maximum)	10 gp pays 1 gp	40

through their manager. If a team can't pay up their wager, it is their manager who must pick up the tab. Consult the Game Wagers sidebar for details on how the Champion's Games betting pool works if the PCs want to get in on the action.

Adjusting the Odds: The PCs, as unknown gladiators, begin as rank 3 gladiators. During the Free Dinner, the PCs can try to adjust these odds with Bluff checks. The party can attempt to adjust their odds up to three times during the Free Dinner. The PC with the highest Bluff modifier makes the primary roll, and can be assisted by any other PCs who make a DC 10 check—each success grants the primary PC a +2 bonus to his roll. The DC to alter rank depends on what rank the PCs are currently at. You can only increase or decrease your rank by a maximum of 1 per check. As the adventure continues, the PCs' rank continues to increase as indicated in the sidebar. The rank of other gladiators shifts as well, but not as quickly, since you can assume that they're not as aggressive about presentation.

Raknian's Interest: Any PC that watches Raknian for any amount of time may make a DC 15 Sense Motive check. Success indicates the PC notices that Raknian seems to have an unusual interest in them. Of course, this is due to the fact that the PCs have defeated two of his allies (Zyrxog the illithid and Theldrick the cleric), and Raknian's initially not sure how to handle the PCs, nor is he sure if they know he hired Zyrxog. He decides to let things go for now, but if the PCs make it through the first battle, he begins to plot against them. For now, he plays coy. If the PCs approach him to speak with him, he treats them as any other group of gladiators—honorably if tersely. If the PCs don't take the hint, Captain Okoral and his guards ask the PCs to return to their tables. If the PCs continue harassing Raknian or accuse him of any crimes, they are escorted from the arena and disqualified from the games. Raknian takes other routes to handle them (such as sending Okoral after them) in this event.

Ekaym's Obsession: At some point during the dinner, allow PCs who have spent any significant amount of time near Ekaym a DC 20 Sense Motive check. Success indicates that the PC notices that Ekaym seems to be more interested in observing and listening to Raknian than in promoting their team to the bookkeepers. If confronted, Ekyam tries to play off his apparent obsession as an interest in all things political and spends the rest of the evening representing the party well. Of course, Ekaym is watching Raknian to see if he can pick up any clues as to his sister's fate.

Tirra's Visit: At some point during the Free Dinner, the PCs receive a visit from **Tirra** (N female elf rogue 9), an adventurer associated with Auric's party. Dressed in stunning soirée attire, the beautiful rogue (herself a member of the Free City's Guild of Thieves) has a proposal for one of the PCs from the Master Thief. The Master Thief, impressed by accounts on the PCs he has heard, thinks that they have a good chance at winning the final match and could thus dethrone Auric's Warband. He wants to place a big bet on them with the arena bookmakers, many of whom are under Raknian's control. For the final round, the bookmakers have offered the Thieves' Guild special odds for wagers against Auric's Warband. Tirra informs the PCs that if they can defeat Auric, Khellek, and their leatherworks (flesh golems), the Guild is willing to split a portion of their winnings amounting to 7,500 gp to the group if they're willing to part with 2,500 gp of their own up front. If any of the party members are looking for an angle to get into the Free City Thieves' Guild, Tirra whispers to them that paying up and winning the Champion's Games may well be enough to get them in. Finally, she asks the party for a personal favor: if they do go up against Auric, she hopes they'll fight merci-

OKORAL

Rules of Battle

- All battles are potentially lethal, but a gladiator always has the option of surrender. To surrender, a gladiator must drop his weapons, kneel, and hold both hands in the air. A gladiator who attacks a surrendering foe is immediately disqualified (and likely arrested for assault or murder). A gladiator who surrenders and then attacks another gladiator is also immediately disqualified.
- Gladiators that can fly or levitate may do so up to a height of 40 feet. A gladiator that flies any higher is disqualified. Burrowing into the arena's floor is forbidden.
- A match persists until one team is victorious, either through the death or the surrender of all opposing teams.
- Winning gladiators have no right to the spoils of the fallen. A defeated gladiator keeps his gear, or in the case of death, ownership of gear reverts to his team or manager.
- Any tactic that endangers spectators is grounds for immediate disqualification and possible legal action.
- A disqualified gladiator must cease fighting at once and must move to the edge of the field of battle immediately. Failure to comply results in the disqualification of the entire team. Once a gladiator is disqualified, he may no longer take part in any remaining battles.
- Awards are given after each battle.

Game Wagers

The Champion's Games are inexorably tied to betting and wagers. Several merchants and bookkeepers (sponsored by Raknian) keep track of the odds on a large slate board in the arena, but there is no central booking agency in place. Bets are handled on a personal level between individuals, but by mandate of the city government, taking bets requires ownership of a booking license. These licenses are available for the low price of 100 gp from the city—it's much easier to collect your taxes up front than trying to chase down the winners afterward.

All of the gladiator teams have a rank, and this rank determines the payout ratio for wagers. These ratios are listed in the "Gladiator Ranks" sidebar. Wagers generally have a maximum of 250 gp, but a successful DC 25 Gather Information check can uncover some high rollers who accept wagers up to 500 gp.

Some of the gladiators are returning competitors from previous years, while others are new and untested. Rankings are given in the "Meet the Competition" sidebar.

If the PCs place wagers on other battles, you can run those battles on a round by round basis after generating stat blocks for each of the groups involved in order to determine who wins. This is, of course, horrifically time-consuming. Instead, try to encourage the PCs to place bets on (or even against) their own battles.

If the PCs insist on placing bets on other games, one quick and easy way to determine the winner of a battle is to have each group of gladiators make a d20 check modified by their group's EL. The winner of 3 out of 5 of these checks is the winner of that battle.

Meet the Competition

Although "The Champion's Belt" details only a few encounters between the PCs and the other gladiators, chances are that the PCs talk to the competition more than once. This list of gladiators is provided to aid any ad-lib encounters you may need to run between the PCs and other groups.

There are 24 teams of gladiators in all. Their group names, ELs, and initial ranks are detailed below.

Team Name	EL	Initial Rank
Arcane Auriga	10	6
Auric's Warband	12	9
Badlands Revenge	9	5
Chuko's Ravens	7	4
Draconic Brood	11	7
Drunken Devilry	6	3
Final Phoenix	7	3
Guttuggers	8	4
Iron Hill Monkeys	5	3
Night Owls	4	2
One of Us	4	2
Pitch Blade	12	8
Rauth's Dragoons	6	3
Sapphire Squad	9	5
Snow Leopards	9	4
Teeth of Kord	5	3
The Crazy Eight	6	4
The Fisthammers	8	4
The Gravediggers	8	3
The Skull of Murq	9	5
The Unhumans	7	4
The Woodchuckers	3	1
Varmint Patrol	5	2
(Player Characters)	—	3

fully. Auric and Khellek are her friends, and she'd like to see them make it through the games. If asked why she's not taking part, Tirra makes a wry face and observes that, "Brawling with gladiators is bad for business." If any of the PCs in your group has already established a relationship with Tirra earlier in the campaign, she may well spend the rest of the evening at that character's side, trading stories and companionship until the dinner is over.

Fireworks Display: The Free Dinner ends with an impressive show of fireworks. A group of dancers surrounds the central bonfire and begins whirling around it, their lean bodies outlined by the roaring flames. As the dance builds, an impressive display of explosions and arcs of fire and lightning burst upward into the air from the bonfire, thanks to a *pyrotechnics* spell and several illusions cast by Talabir Welik. In the sudden silence that follows, the dancers fall to the ground and Loris Raknian announces in a deep baritone voice: "The Champion's Games have begun!"

Event 2: Into the Coenoby

After the banquet, the PCs must part with Ekaym (and Tirra, if she's still present), who wishes them good luck. The PCs and the other gladiators are led to area **H** on the arena grounds, and over the course of an hour each group is lowered down to area **1** of the understructure. Then, with over a hundred fellow gladiators of the most widely varying races and callings, the PCs are led even deeper underground (via the stairs in area **5**) to the large, partly natural, partly artificial cave called the Coenoby (area **16**).

The Coenoby is unusually comfortable, smoothly floored, well-lit and warm, and outfitted with an underground stream of fresh water. Here the PCs are given one of the twenty-four underground lodges available to the gladiators (see Part Three for a description of these quarters). The place is very crowded, but everyone knows that the number of gladiators is going to

drop to one sixth by the end of the following day, so nobody worries too much.

Numerous Arena Wardens patrol the Coenoby, their presence often being the only thing that keeps the peace. Apart from the gladiators and the guards, the only others present are the team of chefs and waiters who cater to the participants. This personnel is accompanied by a strong force of guards and prepares three meals a day before the morning, afternoon, and evening periods. The kitchen doubles as the infirmary, where **Palemon Nodor** (N male human expert 5; Heal +17), an old barber and surgeon hired by Raknian, is available to treat gladiators who are in peril of their life with his Heal skill. Palemon is a strictly professional person who rarely lets himself be involved in evil (or good) pursuits. He is quite knowledgeable about the Free City, the Coenoby, and the Titan's House. Palemon can be a useful source of information for the PCs during their stay in the arena understructure.

Due to the high number of tenants in the Coenoby, the control of Raknian's guards is very strict during the first night. Gladiators are expected to remain in this chamber until the games begin the next day. See the description of the Coenoby in Part Three if the PCs start to explore. If the PCs wish to socialize, they'll find most of the other gladiators too nervous, excited, or just too unfriendly to want to talk. Nonetheless, you can use this opportunity to introduce the PCs to some of the gladiators they'll be fighting against in the days to come. Every hour, save for the hours between 10:00 PM and 6:00 AM, a servant sounds a low horn a number of times to announce the hour.

After the battles begin, many of these rooms double as recovery chambers. Palemon is on hand to provide what aid he can, but his attentions are limited. Typically, a gladiator's manager brings healing potions or a cleric to the Coenoby the day after a fight, but otherwise, the PCs must tend to their own ills.

During their stay in the Coenoby, characters may hear all sorts of gossip and rumors. Some of these might be tall tales about the other gladiators, while others could be actual and useful tidbits about a gladiator team's weaknesses. One rumor that the PCs should hear at some point suggests that ghouls once dwelt in the area of underground buildings to the south known as the Titan's House. This rumor says that Raknian himself beat back the ghouls and plugged the entrance to their warren with a stone seal in the pool in the Titan's House, but no gladiator has ever tried to open the plug to verify these stories.

Event 3: First Battle (EL 12)

When the PCs awake on the first day, they find a crowd has gathered near the meal tables at the north end of the Coenoby—the day's battles have been posted to the wall near the door to area **17** and the gladiators are eager to see who they'll be fighting. The PCs are scheduled to fight in the second round, starting at 10:00 AM. Their opponents are the following teams: "Arcane Auriga," "Badlands Revenge," and "Sapphire Squad." The first battle is scheduled for 8:00 AM, so the PCs should have some time to appraise or even interact with members of these three teams. If they don't, the other gladiators certainly seek out the PCs to do the same.

Arcane Auriga: This team consists of four elven women, exiles from the court of Celene for scandalous behavior unbefitting a noble. The elves don't talk about their checkered past, and tend to keep quietly to themselves. They assume any men who attempt conversation are boors seeking companionship, and are quick to send such away with insults and threats. Rennida Auriga is the leader of this group of fighters; the others are her daughter Krinasa and two cousins, Eelyssa and Anetah. Their initial attitude is unfriendly—if made helpful, they agree to work with the PCs to defeat Badlands Revenge and the Sapphire Squad before fighting the PCs.

Badlands Revenge: Led by a human barbarian/druid named Joren, Badlands Revenge is a particularly savage group of gladiators. Joren leads three gnoll fighters he hired specifically for their skill with halberds and their capacity to do a lot of damage in a short amount of time. Joren's band is even less communicative than Arcane Auriga, but observes the PCs carefully, seeking a weakness to exploit. Their initial attitude is hostile—if made helpful, the best the PCs can expect from this group is a promise to not strike death blows if the chance arises. Joren's primary reason for entering the games is to avenge the hundreds of animals killed every year in the arena by Raknian's gladiators. He hopes that by defeating Auric he'll deprive Raknian of fame, honor, and income.

Sapphire Squad: The swashbuckling janni Korush and his pair of blue-cloaked human mercenaries are the most pleasant of the three groups the PCs face. Korush is more than happy to spend the last few hours before the fight trading stories with the PCs. He entered the Champion's Games as much as to show off his combat skills as to have a chance at the prize money. Egotistical and proud, Korush levies his doubtful charms (consisting primarily of his battle prowess and improbable stories about his virility) on any female adventurers present, hoping to undermine their resolve against him in the fight to come. His initial attitude is indifferent (or friendly, if there are any female PCs on the team)—if made helpful, he agrees to ally with the PCs and to aid them in defeating Arcane Auriga and Badlands Revenge first. Korush fights using a unique and artistic fighting style, and if he befriends the PCs he may offer to teach them this style. Characters who wish to focus in this style may take the Graceful Edge feat the next time they earn a new feat.

Creatures: At 10:00, a group of guards gathers the PCs and the members of the other three teams and escorts them back up to area 1. The groups are raised up to the battlefield above, one at a time, as Talabir Welik (using a magically amplified voice so all can hear) announces each of the teams, along with the name of the team's leader and a short description of the team's specialty. For Arcane Auriga, he comments on the elves' deadly precision with their arrows. For Badlands Revenge, it's the team's frothing savagery. For Sapphire Squad, it's the team's skill at mounted combat. Try to find something equally "iconic" about your PCs' group to announce as well. During this time, gladiators often take advantage of the time to cast longer-duration on themselvest spells or drink potions. Since it only takes 2 minutes for the battle to begin once gladiators start appearing on the battlefield, any spell with a duration of longer than 2 minutes is still in effect when the battle begins. If the PCs don't think of casting spells before the battle, they'll certainly see Joren and Rennida doing so.

The Free City Arena is a huge place. At standard miniatures scale, a map of the arena would have to be over 3 feet wide and 6 feet long. If your gaming table is big enough, you could theoretically present the entire arena as a battlefield. Fortunately for the rest of us, a standard battlemat is probably enough. The battleground is open terrain, and after the four groups are announced, each is led by a group of guards to a marker on the ground. Each group starts the battle at one of the corners of a 100-foot square. Splashes of blood in the sandy ground here and there testify to the savagery of the previous combat. As everyone gets in place, the sound of the crowd in the surrounding stadium swells into a roar.

The first battle of the Games is a free-for-all clash between four groups of combatants. The PCs are likely to win this one quite easily, and the fight proceeds fairly throughout. The guards retreat to the edge of the battlefield, and when Loris Raknian orders the battle to begin, a trumpeter announces its start with a brilliant peal from his instrument.

Note: Spells, potions, and wands in the stat blocks below that are marked with asterisks have been used by their owners during the few minutes before the battle begins. The stat blocks themselves incorporate the benefits granted by these effects as appropriate. Unless the battle itself lasts for more than 2 minutes, you can assume that these spell effects last for the duration of the battle.

RENNIDA **CR 9**

Arcane Auriga

Female elf fighter 5/wizard 3/arcane archer 1

N Medium humanoid

Init +6; **Senses** low-light vision; Listen +3, Spot +3

Languages Common, Draconic, Elven, Sylvan

AC 21, touch 15, flat-footed 16

hp 53 (9 HD)

Immune sleep

Fort +8, **Ref** +10, **Will** +3

Spd 30 ft.

Melee adamantine short sword +8 (1d6/19–20)

Ranged +1 *frost longbow* +15/+10 (1d8+3/×3) or +1 *frost longbow* +13/+13/+8 (1d8+3/×3)

Base Atk +7; **Grp** +7

Atk Options Manyshot, Point Blank Shot, Precise Shot, Rapid Shot

Combat Gear *potion of cat's grace*, potion of cure serious wounds*

Spells Prepared (CL 3rd; ranged touch +13, 15% spell failure):

*2nd—Melf's acid arrow, mirror image**

1st—jump, ray of enfeeblement, true strike*

0—acid splash, daze (DC 12), *ray of frost, resistance*

Abilities Str 10, Dex 22, Con 12, Int 14, Wis 8, Cha 12

SQ summon familiar (weasel named Ogistille)

Feats Alertness[B] (when Ogistille is in arm's reach), Manyshot, Point Blank Shot[B], Precise Shot, Quick Draw, Rapid Shot[B], Scribe Scroll[B], Weapon Focus (longbow)[B], Weapon Specialization (longbow)

Skills Climb +7, Concentration +10, Craft (bowmaking) +10, Jump +27, Ride +11, Spellcraft +5, Swim +6

Possessions combat gear, *+1 mithral breastplate, +1 frost longbow* with 40 arrows, adamantine short sword

ELVEN ARCHERS (3) **CR 5**

Arcane Auriga
Female elf fighter 5
N Medium humanoid
Init +10; **Senses** low-light vision; Listen +3, Spot +3
Languages Common, Elven, Sylvan

AC 20, touch 16, flat-footed 14
hp 37 (5 HD)
Immune sleep
Fort +5, **Ref** +7, **Will** +2

Spd 30 ft.
Melee mwk short sword +6 (1d6/19–20)
Ranged *+1 longbow* +13 (1d8+3/×3) or *+1 longbow* +11/+11 (1d8+3/×3)
Base Atk +5; **Grp** +5
Atk Options Point Blank Shot, Rapid Shot
Combat Gear *potion of cat's grace**

Abilities Str 10, Dex 22, Con 12, Int 12, Wis 13, Cha 8
Feats Improved Initiative, Point Blank Shot[B], Rapid Shot, Weapon Focus (longbow)[B], Weapon Specialization (longbow)[B]
Skills Climb +8, Handle Animal +7, Ride +16
Possessions combat gear, *+1 studded leather armor, +1 longbow* with 20 arrows, masterwork short sword

JOREN **CR 9**

Badlands Revenge
Male human barbarian 4/druid 5
CN Medium humanoid
Init +2; **Senses** Listen +10, Spot +3
Languages Common, Druidic, Gnoll

AC 21, touch 12, flat-footed 19; uncanny dodge
hp 86 (8 HD)
Fort +12, **Ref** +4, **Will** +8

Spd 40 ft.
Melee *+1 spear* +11/+6 (1d8+5/×3)
Ranged *+1 sling* +10 (1d4+1)
Base Atk +7; **Grp** +10
Atk Option Power Attack
Special Atk rage 2/day, wild shape 1/day
Combat Gear scroll of *summon nature's ally IV, wand of bull's strength** (13 charges, used on self and on Scriminaduro)
Spells Prepared (CL 5th, +9 ranged touch):
3rd—*cure moderate wounds, greater magic fang** (cast on Scriminaduro's natural weapons)
2nd—*barkskin**, *bear's endurance**, *cat's grace**
1st—*cure light wounds, longstrider**, *produce flame, speak with animals**
0—*cure minor wounds* (2), *guidance* (2), *light*

Abilities Str 17, Dex 14, Con 18, Int 12, Wis 17, Cha 8
SQ animal companion, nature sense, resist nature's lure, trackless step, trap sense +1, wild empathy +6, woodland stride
Feats Diehard, Endurance, Power Attack[B], Self-Sufficient , Track
Skills Concentration +14, Handle Animal +6, Heal +15, Intimidate +6, Knowledge (nature) +13, Listen +10, Ride +11, Survival +14, Swim +9
Possessions combat gear, *+1 hide armor, +1 large wooden shield, +1 spear, +1 sling* with 20 bullets

Raging Crocodile: While raging and in the shape of a crocodile, Joren's stats change as follows

AC 17, touch 11, flat-footed 14; uncanny dodge
hp 110 (8 HD)
Fort +15, **Ref** +5, **Will** +10
Spd 40 ft., swim 30 ft.
Melee bite +15 melee (1d8+12) or tail slap +15 melee (1d12+12)
Grp +15
Atk Options improved grab (bite)
Abilities Str 27, Dex 16, Con 25

SCRIMINADURO **CR —**

Badlands Revenge
Male dire badger animal companion
N Medium animal
Monster Manual 62
Init +3; **Senses** low-light vision, scent; Listen +6, Spot +6

AC 16, touch 13, flat-footed 13
hp 28 (3 HD)
Fort +7, **Ref** +6, **Will** +4

Spd 30 ft.
Melee 2 claws +7 melee (1d4+5) and bite +2 melee (1d6+3)
Base Atk +2; **Grp** +4
Special Atk rage

Abilities Str 18, Dex 17, Con 19, Int 2, Wis 12, Cha 10
Feats Alertness, Toughness, Track[B]
Skills Listen +6, Spot +6

Rage: Once Scriminaduro takes damage in combat, he enters a rage on his next turn. His stats change as follows:

AC 14, touch 11, flat-footed 11
hp 34 (3 HD)
Fort +9
Melee 2 claws +9 melee (1d4+7) and bite +4 melee (1d6+4)
Grp +6

JOREN'S HALBERDIERS (2) **CR 3**

Badlands Revenge
Male gnoll fighter 2
CN Medium humanoid
Monster Manual 130
Init +1; **Senses** Listen +5, Spot +4
Languages Gnoll

AC 16, touch 11, flat-footed 15
hp 39 (4 HD)
Fort +9, **Ref** +1, **Will** +1 (+2 against fear)

Spd 40 ft.
Melee mwk halberd +8 (1d10+13/×3)†
Base Atk +3; **Grp** +8
Atk Options Cleave, Power Attack
Combat Gear *potion of aid**, *potion of longstrider**

Abilities Str 20, Dex 13, Con 16, Int 8, Wis 12, Cha 6
Feats Cleave[B], Improved Natural Armor, Power Attack, Weapon Focus (halberd)[B]
Skills Listen +5, Spot +4
Possessions combat gear, masterwork studded leather armor, masterwork halberd

†Includes adjustment for 3-point Power Attack.

Graceful Edge

Choose one type of one-handed slashing melee weapon, such as a scimitar or longsword, for which you have already selected the Weapon Focus feat. You wield this weapon with an almost unnatural grace.

Prerequisite: Weapon Finesse, Weapon Focus (any one-handed slashing weapon), base attack bonus +1

Benefit: If you do not wield a shield or weapon in your off-hand, you treat your chosen weapon as a light weapon.

If you do not wield a shield or weapon in your off-hand, you also gain a +1 shield bonus to your AC while wielding your chosen weapon. When you are fighting defensively or using the total defense action, this shield bonus increases to +2.

Special: A fighter may select Graceful Edge as one of his fighter bonus feats.

You may take this feat more than once—each time you do, it applies to a new one-handed slashing weapon you have Weapon Focus in.

KORUSH **CR 7**

Sapphire Squad
Male janni swashbuckler 3
N Medium outsider (native)
Monster Manual 116, *Complete Warrior* 11
Init +10; **Senses** darkvision 60 ft.; Listen +10, Spot +10
Languages Auran, Celestial, Common; telepathy 100 ft.

AC 23, touch 16, flat-footed 17; Dodge, Mobility
hp 61 (9 HD)
Resist fire 10
Fort +10, **Ref** +13, **Will** +7

Spd 30 ft., fly 20 ft. (perfect)
Melee +2 *scimitar* +18/+13 (1d6+10/18–20)
Ranged mwk composite longbow +16/+11 (1d8+4/×3)
Base Atk +9; **Grp** +13
Special Atk change size 2/day
Spell-Like Abilities (CL 12th):
3/day—*invisibility* (self only), *speak with animals**
1/day—*create food and water* (CL 7th), *ethereal jaunt*

Abilities Str 18, Dex 22, Con 15, Int 18, Wis 12, Cha 12
SQ elemental endurance, grace +1 (bonus to Reflex), insightful strike (Int bonus to light melee weapon damage), *plane shift*
Feats Dodge, Graceful Edge (scimitar), Improved Initiative[B], Mobility, Weapon Finesse[B], Weapon Focus (scimitar)
Skills Appraise +13, Bluff +10, Concentration +11, Craft (bowmaking) +13, Craft (weaponsmithing) +13, Diplomacy +10, Escape Artist +17, Listen +10, Move Silently +14, Ride +14, Sense Motive +13, Spot +10, Tumble +15
Possessions +1 *mithral chain shirt*, +2 *scimitar*, masterwork composite longbow (+4 Str) with 12 +1 *arrows*, *gloves of Dexterity* +2, heavy war horse

KORUSH'S MERCENARIES (2) **CR 5**

Sapphire Squad
Male human fighter 5
LN Medium humanoid
Init +1; **Senses** Listen +1, Spot +1
Languages Common

AC 19, touch 11, flat-footed 18
hp 42 (5 HD)
Fort +7, **Ref** +3, **Will** +3

Spd 20 ft.
Melee +1 *scimitar* +10 (1d6+6/18–20)
Ranged mwk composite longbow +7 (1d8+3/×3)
Base Atk +5; **Grp** +8
Atk Options Ride-By Attack, Spirited Charge

Abilities Str 16, Dex 13, Con 14, Int 8, Wis 12, Cha 10
Feats Mounted Archery[B], Mounted Combat[B], Ride-By Attack, Spirited Charge, Weapon Focus (scimitar)[B], Weapon Specialization (scimitar)[B]
Skills Handle Animal +8, Ride +11
Possessions +1 *chainmail*, masterwork heavy steel shield, +1 *scimitar*, masterwork composite longbow (+3 Str) and 20 arrows, *cloak of resistance* +1, heavy war horse

Heavy War Horse (3): hp 30 each; *Monster Manual* 273.

Arcane Auriga Tactics: A minute or so before the battle begins, Rennida drinks her *potion of cat's grace* and casts *mirror image* and *jump* on herself. Her daughter and cousins each drink a *potion of cat's grace* as well. Even if they didn't ally with the PCs, the elves focus their initial attacks on Badlands Revenge (unless the PCs go before them and attack them first). They do their best to stay at range so they can use their arrows. Rennida opens her first two rounds of combat with a *ray of enfeeblement* and a *Melf's acid arrow*. She saves *true strike* to use against a foe she thinks she can drop with one attack. The elves surrender if reduced to 6 hit points or less.

Badlands Revenge Tactics: A minute before the battle begins, Joren casts *speak with animals*, *barkskin*, *bear's endurance*, *cat's grace*, and *longstrider* on himself. He uses his *wand of bull's strength* on himself and his animal companion Scriminaduro, and casts *greater magic fang* on Scriminaduro to enhance all three of his natural attacks by +1. He does not cast any spells on his gnoll thugs, but they each drink a *potion of aid* and a *potion of longstrider*. In combat, the gnolls rush to close in melee with the PCs or with whoever attacks them first, making full Power Attacks with their halberds. Joren hangs back and casts *produce flame*, throwing fire at the closest target each round until his gnolls fall or he is engaged in melee. When this occurs, he wildshapes into a crocodile and rages. The gnolls fight to the death, but if both gnolls are slain, Joren surenders if brought below 5 hit points and he's no longer raging.

Sapphire Squad Tactics: Korush and his two men quickly mount up; Korush casts *speak with animals* so he can direct their mounts easier. He's into the battle for the glory and the thrill, and tends to grandstand. He sends his two mercenaries in to make ride-by attacks each round while he hangs back for the first two rounds and uses change size on two enemies to reduce their size. He only uses *invisibility* as a last-ditch attempt to escape peril—he'd rather be seen in battle. His mercenaries surrender if brought below 10 hit points, but he won't surrender until brought below 5 hit points.

Development: When the last of the PCs' opponents are defeated or surrender, the crowd cheers as Raknian proclaims them the victors. Ekaym is given the awards (the trophy and 1,500 gp) and the PCs are escorted back down to the Coenoby. You should determine at this point which of the other five gladiator teams also won, since they are now the only other teams housed in the Coenoby. Auric's Warband and Pitch Blade must be two of these five (since they are the teams the PCs will face on day 3 and day 5), but the remaining three can be any teams you choose.

If the PCs are defeated, the adventure isn't over. Although they're disqualified and escorted from the arena, they can still return as patrons or explore the understructure using stealth or other options.

Event 4: Ekyam's Request

At some point after Event 3 but before the PCs have a chance to really start exploring the understructure, Ekyam pays them a visit in the Coenoby. Armed with a toothy smile, he offers to pay the PCs their share of the winnings now. He's also more than willing to hold on to their winnings for them for now (although he won't do anything foolish with the money). After he congratulates them, his manner grows more serious. He takes the party aside to their chambers, and in a low voice he tells them he has a confession to make.

"While it's nice that you turned out to be pretty good gladiators, I must admit that I had a hidden motive for entering you in the games.

You see... my sister Lahaka disappeared here last year, not long after the previous Champion's Games. I've been looking for her for months now, but I've hit a dead end. She was a traveling entertainer, a bright joy that brought happiness to cities throughout the world. It seems that her travels eventually brought her here, to the Free City, and more to the point, she caught Loris Raknian's eye. I believe that they became lovers. What I do know is that she vanished the day after the Champion's Games ended. I've paid for divination spells to learn more, but alas have learned little. And so I decided to come to the games themselves. I hoped that by entering some gladiators in the competition, I'd have a chance to explore the area, talk with Raknian, and maybe find out what happened to Lahaka. But so far, I've found nothing. Raknian's nearly impossible to get to, and I've uncovered no clues in the outlying buildings. There's two places I've not been able to reach—his palace and the arena understructure. This is where you come in, my friends. If you can slip away from the Coenoby between battles and search the surrounding rooms for clues as to what happened to my sister, I'll turn over all of the winnings from the games to you. What do you say?"

Assuming the PCs decide to aid him, Ekaym thanks the PCs profusely. Just in case, he provides them with a description of his sister, although he fears she has long since been murdered. He also promises to do what he can to bring them additional healing supplies over the following days. He can bring in 1,200 gp in healing magic each day. If the PCs want to communicate with anyone outside or purchase additional supplies from the city, he's also willing to act as their go-between so they don't have to leave the arena and risk disqualification.

Event 5: Second Battle (EL 12)

At daybreak of the third day, the remaining gladiator teams waken to discover that the fight schedules for the second round have been posted. The PCs have been scheduled to fight at 2:00 against "Pitch Blade." Although the PCs likely have no reason to suspect otherwise, this match is no accident—Pitch Blade is managed by Captain Okoral, Raknian's cohort. Okoral takes great pride in the gladiator team he's assembled, and believes that they'll have no problem defeating the PCs in combat. The members of Pitch Blade don't know that Okoral and Raknian want the PCs dead, but they fight fiericely nonetheless. Okoral has ordered Pitch Blade to avoid contact with the PCs to prevent them from learning about any weaknesses the team may have, so until the battle begins, this team remains in their lodge. A DC 20 Gather Information check reveals details of the two dwarves' tactics and strengths.

Creatures: Pitch Blade consists of two dangerous killers, a pair of dwarf barbarians named Drusfan and Pharbol. Although the PCs doubtless outnumber the pair, Pitch Blade's strengths are impressive and a fight against them shouldn't be easy.

DRUSFAN AND PHARBOL (PITCH BLADE) **CR 10**

Male dwarf barbarian 10
CN Medium humanoid
Init +2; **Senses** darkvision 60 ft.; Listen +14, Spot +1
Languages Common, Dwarven

AC 27, touch 15, flat-footed 25; improved uncanny dodge
hp 120 (10 HD); **DR** 2/—
Fort +12 (+14 vs poison), **Ref** +5, **Will** +4 (+2 vs spells)

Spd 40 ft., fly 60 ft.
Melee *+1 flaming adamantine bastard sword* +11/+6 (1d10+10/17–20 plus 1d6 fire)†
Base Atk +10; **Grp** +14
Atk Options Improved Sunder, Power Attack
Special Atk rage 3/day
Combat Gear *potion of barkskin +4*, potion of bull's strength*, potion of cure moderate wounds, potion of fly*, potion of shield of faith +3**

Abilities Str 18, Dex 14, Con 20, Int 8, Wis 12, Cha 8
SQ dwarf traits, fast movement, illiteracy, trap sense +3
Feats Improved Critical (bastard sword), Improved Sunder, Exotic Weapon (bastard sword), Power Attack, Weapon Focus (bastard sword)
Skills Climb +17, Jump +21, Listen +14, Survival +14
Possessions combat gear, *+1 chain shirt, +1 heavy steel shield, +1 flaming adamantine bastard sword, amulet of health +2*

Rage: When raging, their statistics change as follows:
AC 25, touch 13, flat-footed 23; improved uncanny dodge
hp 140
Fort +14, **Will** +6
Melee *+1 flaming adamantine bastard sword* +13/+8 (1d10+12/17–20 plus 1d6 fire)†
Grp +16
†Includes bonus for 5-point Power Attack.

Tactics: The two dwarves drink their potions (save for their healing potions) before battle, and as they wait for the fight to start they shout, curse, and otherwise try to intimidate the PCs. When the battle begins, both dwarves rage and leap into the air, using flight to close the distance between themselves and the PCs as quickly as possible. The dwarves have been well-briefed on the party's strengths, and aim to take down the group's healers first. Against foes who have powerful weapons, the dwarves use Improved Sunder (remember that their adamantine weapons ignore hardness). Neither dwarf even considers the option of surrender, and both fight to the death. They've been told by Okoral to kill the PCs if possible, even if they ask for surrender—if it comes to this, Okoral has promised to pay the two handsomely to make up for their certain disqualification after such treachery.

Development: The crowd cheers louder than before when the PCs defeat Pitch Blade, and in several sections the enthusiastic spectators begin chanting the group's name. Others chant the name of any PC who particularly distinguished himself in the battle. Characters who observe Raknian and make a DC 20 Spot check are entitled to DC 20 Sense Motive checks. A successful Sense Motive check is enough to notice that Raknian is both surprised and angry that the PCs survived, but when it comes time to give Ekaym the prize money and trophy, he hides his anger well.

If the PCs leave either dwarf alive, one (or both) may try to kill the PCs in revenge for their humiliating defeat. This attack can come later in the evening (after Okoral arranges for the dwarves to sneak in to the Coenoby past the guards) or later in the campaign, as you see fit.

In any event, that night the Coenoby is particularly quiet. Only three gladiator

teams remain; the PCs, Auric's Warband, and a third team of your choice.

Event 6: Madtooth the Hungry (EL 13)

Late in the evening on day three, the fight schedule for the next day is posted. The PCs soon discover that Auric's Warband and the other gladiator team will be fighting to determine who goes on to the final match on the fifth day. The PCs themselves are scheduled to do battle with a mysterious monster referred to as Madtooth the Hungry. Many are somewhat shocked to discover that Auric's Warband won't be fighting Madtooth—traditionally, the previous year's winner takes part in the beast battle as a point of honor.

At some point during the night, the PCs overhear some guards talking about Madtooth. During this conversation, one of the guards complains about how difficult it is to keep Madtooth's cage so cold, and how he'll be glad once the games are over and they can return the enormous frost salamander back to the frozen north. A character who makes a DC 22 Knowledge (arcana) check knows that frost salamanders radiate deadly cold and are themselves most vulnerable to fire attacks. Of course, even PCs who don't make the check are likely to realize that creatures native to arctic climates are often vulnerable to fire.

Unfortunately, these guards were asked by Raknian to stage this conversation for the PCs to trick them into thinking they were learning about Madtooth's weaknesses. Raknian hopes to trick the PCs into preparing defenses and offenses that work best against what they believe is a creature vulnerable to fire. In truth, Madtooth is a dangerous beast Raknian's agents captured earlier in the year in the distant Barrier Peaks—a constantly-hungry (and remarkably fire resistant) aberration known as a froghemoth.

The next day at 11:00, the PCs are brought once again up to the battle arena. Once again, Talabir announces the PCs, but this time they see no obvious foe to fight. Talabir reveals that the beast-wranglers are having a tough time with Madtooth, but that the monster is on its way. Ten long minutes drag on, as the crowd grows increasingly impatient and Talabir does what he can to keep them from becoming too angry.

This is, of course, another trick pulled by Raknian, who hopes to run out the durations on any spells the PCs may have cast on themselves when they were expecting the fight to only be a few minutes away.

Just as the crowd seems to be preparing for a riot, the eastern gates to the arena open and a team of a dozen soldiers dragging a massive iron cube on an oversized chariot enter the arena. The sides of the cage bear the word "Madtooth" in bright red letters clenched in the massive jaws of some huge monster. Brackish water sloshes and leaks from under the cage. Characters expecting to fight a frost salamander may be confused by the apparent lack of ice on the cage. The wagon's progress is slow as the guards drag the massive iron cage into the center of the arena. As they do, the cage shakes and trembles as some enormous monster within roars incessantly. The spectacle drives the crowd wild, and in moments they're chanting "MADTOOTH! MADTOOTH! MADTOOTH!" As the guards move the cage in to place about 50 feet from the PCs, they each take hold of different ropes attached to strategic pins and clasps in the cage's sides. Each guard retreats out 100 feet, holding a rope in his hands.

The crowd grows momentarily silent again as Talabir speaks. "And now, the moment you've been waiting for! Watch in fear as these brave gladiators pit their skills against the eternal hunger of the worst the Barrier Peaks have to offer! I give you... MADTOOTH THE HUNGRY!"

With this final cry, the guards each tug on their ropes. The walls of the cage unfold and fall away, revealing the terrible froghemoth in all its glory.

Froghemoth

Froghemoth: hp 220; see Appendix.

Tactics: As soon as the froghemoth is unleashed, the guards run. The massive aberration roars and blinks its three eyes against the sudden sunlight, and suffers a –4 penalty on its Initiative check as a result. Once it realizes what's going on, it mindlessly charges at the nearest morsel and attacks. Raknian paid for a *heroes' feast* spell (CL 11th) for the froghemoth to consume early in the morning. The monster's cavernous gullet handled the spell with ease, and it has gained the following benefits as a result:

- 10 temporary hit points (included above)
- Immunity to fear and poison
- +1 morale bonus on attack rolls and Will saves

The froghemoth itself is straightforward in its tactics, focusing on the largest target in sight and fighting to the death.

Development: The spectacle of this battle leaves the crowd in a frenzy. As the froghemoth is slain, they begin chanting the party's group name, and Raknian's shock and discomfort is plainly visible for several seconds

to anyone watching. Eventually, Talabir gets the crowd under control and Raknian, his composure regained, gives Ekaym the trophy and prize money and congratulates the PCs on their tremendous skill.

That night, with only Auric's Warband remaining in the Coenoby, things are quiet.

Event 7: Final Battle (EL 13)

The final battle is scheduled to take place at noon on the fifth day. The PCs are brought to the field of battle second, and when they arrive they find Auric, Khellek, and the three flesh golems known as the Leatherworks that the band uses as thugs waiting for them. The crowd goes wild as the PCs take their position; a scan of the surrounding seats reveals that they are packed nearly to capacity today. It seems almost that the entire Free City has turned out to watch.

Creatures: Although Auric and Khellek are tough customers on their own, they are augmented well by three flesh golems Khellek created using *flesh golem manuals* supplied to him by Raknian for this exact purpose. The golems themselves are kept in storage in Raknian's palace until they are needed for battle; Auric and Khellek do not bring them into the Coenoby.

In the time since they tried to explore the Stirgenest Cairn near Diamond Lake, Auric and his allies Khellek and Tirra have not spent their days idly. They defeated a band of trolls that had been harassing caravans in the Cairn Hills and took down a smuggling operation that had been stepping on the toes of the Thieves' Guild. As a result, all three have gained several experience levels since the PCs have met them last, and although Tirra does not fight with the two in this battle, the rival adventurers should still pose quite a threat to the PCs.

AURIC **CR 10**

Auric's Warband
Male human fighter 10
N Medium humanoid
Init +6; **Senses** Listen –1, Spot –1
Languages Common

AC 26, touch 14, flat-footed 24; Dodge, Mobility
hp 99 (10 HD)
Fort +12, **Ref** +6, **Will** +3

Spd 20 ft., fly 40 ft.
Melee +1 *greatsword* +15/+10 (2d6+13/17–20)†
Ranged mwk light crossbow +13/+8 (1d8/19–20)
Base Atk +10; **Grp** +14
Atk Options Cleave, Power Attack, Spring Attack
Combat Gear *potion of barkskin +3*, potion of bear's endurance*, 2 potions of cure light wounds, potion of fly*, potion of shield of faith +2**

Abilities Str 18, Dex 14, Con 18, Int 10, Wis 8, Cha 12
Feats Cleave[B], Dodge, Greater Weapon Focus (greatsword)[B], Improved Critical (greatsword), Improved Initiative[B], Mobility, Power Attack[B], Rapid Reload, Spring Attack[B], Weapon Focus (greatsword), Weapon Specialization (greatsword)[B]
Skills Climb +16, Intimidate +14, Jump +16
Possessions combat gear, *+1 breastplate, +1 animated heavy steel shield, +1 greatsword*, masterwork light crossbow with 20 bolts, *cloak of resistance +1, gauntlets of ogre power*, champion's belt, 90 gp

†Includes bonus for 2-point Power Attack.

KHELLEK **CR 10**

Auric's Warband
Male human wizard 10
NE Medium humanoid
Init +8; **Senses** Listen +2, Spot +2
Languages Common, Draconic, Elven

AC 22, touch 15, flat-footed 18
hp 51 (10 HD); **DR** 10/adamantine
Fort +7, **Ref** +8, **Will** +8

Spd 30 ft.
Melee mwk dagger +5 (1d4–1/19–20)
Base Atk +5; **Grp** +4
Combat Gear *potion of barkskin +3*, 2 potions of cure moderate wounds*, scroll of *dispel magic*, scroll of *shatter*, *wand of glitterdust* (4 charges), *wand of mage armor** (CL 5, 15 charges), *wand of scorching ray* (CL 8, 43 charges)
Spells Prepared (CL 10th, ranged touch +9):
5th—*feeblemind* (DC 21), quickened *shield*
4th—*stoneskin**, *confusion* (DC 20), *dimension door*, *fear* (DC 18)
3rd—*deep slumber* (DC 19), *fly**, *displacement**, *fireball* (DC 17)
2nd—*cat's grace**, *false life**, *mirror image**, *Tasha's hideous laughter* (DC 18), *touch of idiocy*
1st—*charm person* (DC 17), *grease* (DC 15), *magic missile*, *ray of enfeeblement* (2)
0—*acid splash* (2), *touch of fatigue* (DC 14), *mage hand*

Abilities Str 8, Dex 18, Con 13, Int 19, Wis 10, Cha 12
SQ summon familiar (rat named Zulamakian)
Feats Alertness (as long as familiar is in arm's reach), Craft Wand[B], Craft Wondrous Item[B], Greater Spell Focus (enchantment), Improved Initiative, Quicken Spell, Scribe Scroll[B], Skill Focus (concentration), Spell Focus (enchantment)
Skills Concentration +17, Knowledge (arcana) +15, Knowledge (history) +8, Knowledge (local) +9, Knowledge (the planes) +8, Knowledge (religion) +8, Listen +2, Profession (gambler) +12, Spellcraft +19, Spot +2
Possessions combat gear, masterwork dagger, *headband of intellect +2*, *ring of protection +1*, *cloak of resistance +1*, silver Seeker ring worth 200 gp, 500 gp worth of diamond dust, 123 gp

The Leatherworks, flesh golems (3): hp 79 each; *Monster Manual* 135.

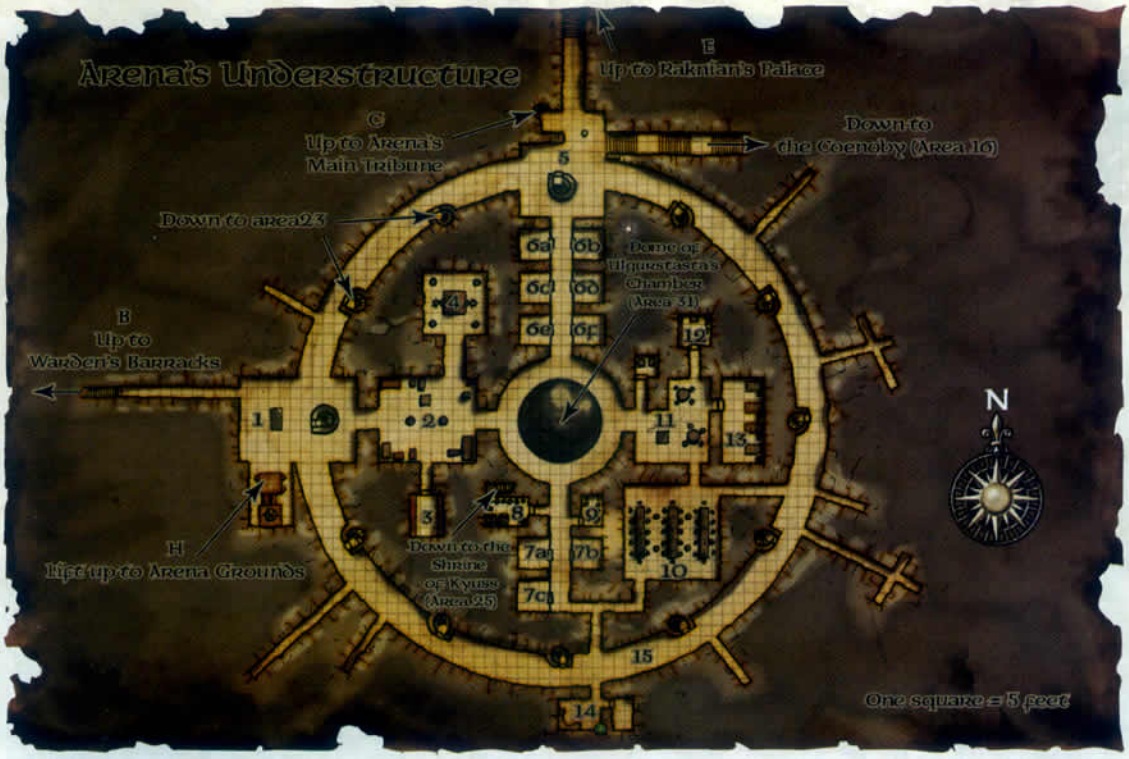
Tactics: Auric's Warband fights in the most straightforward and deadly way. After the group sets up their magical defenses, Auric and the Leatherworks charge the PCs and engage them in melee while Khellek supports them with offensive spells from a point 40 feet above the ground (and just below the limit for flight).

Development: If the PCs have not dealt with the ulgurstasta in area **32**, this event transforms into something altogether horrible as detailed in Part Four.

Otherwise, as the PCs defeat the current champion, the crowd explodes into chaos. The entire arena becomes a deafening roar as nearly 18,000 souls rise to their feet to cheer the party's victory, chanting their names over and over. If the ulgurstasta did not appear, Raknian realizes something horrible has gone wrong with his plans and he retreats into the temple of Kyuss to investigate. Continue with Part Four.

PART THREE: THE HIDDEN SHRINE OF KYUSS

On the first night the PCs stay in the Coenoby, security is fairly tight. There are a lot of gladiators in the Coenoby, and as a result a lot of guards. Sneaking off to explore the understructure is a plan best put off until after the first battles on day 1.



After the first night, the surveillance in the Coenoby is much less intense. As long as the PCs are at least passably subtle about their intentions, no one really notices if they slink off to explore. During the day, the majority of the guards are posted up topside to provide security for other fights and events taking place in the arena, and at night the majority of the guards are so exhausted that they're asleep. There are no regular patrols in the understructure as a result.

If the PCs are caught outside of the Coenoby by guards, a DC 25 Diplomacy check to make the unfriendly guards friendly convinces them to not report the incident if the PCs agree to return to the Coenoby immediately. A Bluff check convinces the guards that the PCs have permission to be where they are, but the guards have a +10 on their Sense Motive check to see through this bluff since it's hard to believe. Finally, a bribe of 50 gp (per guard encountered) is enough to buy that particular patrol's silence.

Service Level

The original Free City Arena was a much smaller, circular structure. The arena itself was rebuilt and expanded many decades ago, but one can still see the original arena's legacy in the shape of the ring that surrounds the service level. This level is used primarily to store supplies and to confine unruly gladiators and beasts. Ceiling height averages at 10 feet and walls are of reinforced masonry. Illumination is provided by iron lanterns hanging from short chains.

During the day, this level is crowded with busy servants, and it would be very difficult to explore it without being noticed and reported to the arena wardens. At night, things are much quieter, with only a single patrol of four of Raknian's bodyguards watching the area. These guards spend most of their time in area **11**, making a lazy patrol of the level once an hour.

1. Western Hall

This hall shows signs of intense recent traffic. The ceiling is supported by a rectangular pillar and by the shell of a circular stairwell. A wooden, life-sized statue of a muscular, half-naked man holding a spear and a horn lies in the southwest corner, where an arcade leads to the space of a large hoist. A heap of metal bars, hinges, and locks sits along the north wall, near a ten-foot-wide, three-foot-tall segment of a wooden frieze. The frieze is decorated with the realistic carvings of fruits and a bull's skull.

The hall is used as a storage area for reusable materials used to build more elaborate battle arenas above. The large southern alcove houses the main hoist of the arena, a complex and efficient machine that can lift up to 4,000 pounds to the surface above with the effort of four laborers at the capstan. The lift is left in its raised position, effectively blocking intrusion from area **H** above.

The stairway to the west connects the hall via a long passageway to the Wardens' Barracks (area **B**). The circular stairway in the middle of the room leads down to the Arena Caverns (area **23**). The stairs also lead up for about 10 feet before ending abruptly in a stone plug—they once led up to the arena above but were blocked off when the entire surface structure was rebuilt and expanded.

2. Workshop

This large room houses a workshop. Tools and simple machines mix with scraps of raw materials, rags, and litter left by busy workers during the previous day. The odor of sawdust, leather, wax, and glue lingers in the air.

The workshop is well equipped for wood, leather, and textile working, although not for blacksmithing.

3. Armory

Two wooden racks line the west and east walls of this room, holding dozens of the odd and picturesque weapons traditionally used by gladiators.

This room contains several racks of gladiatorial and wooden weapons used for fighting and training in the arena. Nets, tridents, polearms, clubs, and spiked chains are the most common weapons found here. None of the weapons are remarkable.

4. Secondary Lift

A lift with two small capstans occupies almost all the space of this room. The machine appears to be locked in the raised position with chains and nails.

This lift can raise up to 3,000 pounds near the center of the arena. In preparation for the Champion's Games, it has been blocked to a raised position and covered with a layer of tiles and sand.

5. Northern Hall

This large, irregular hall seems to be a major junction—many stairways and passages lead in and out.

This hall allows direct access to the Coenoby (area **16**), to Raknian's Palace via a stairway to the north (area **E**) and to the main tribune of the arena above via a stairwell in the northwestern corner (area **C**).

6. Beast Cages (EL 7)

Six identical cells open along this corridor, each one closed by a metal gate. The growl of a large feline breaks the silence, followed by several porcine grunts.

Creatures: These six cages contain animals used alternately as guard beasts and creatures for gladiator fights. The steel gates that close the cages are padlocked (Open Locks DC 20).

The domesticated leopards in the cage are hostile toward intruders and are likely to raise the alarm with loud roars if not silenced or beguiled. The lion and the boars, on the other hand, are unwilling prisoners, and are just plain unfriendly.

Leopard (2): hp 19; *Monster Manual* 274.

Lion: hp 32; *Monster Manual* 274.

Boar (3): hp 25; *Monster Manual* 270.

7. Death Row

These cells hold prisoners who have been condemned to death and are scheduled for execution in the arena. The bodies of executed prisoners are supposedly burned, but in fact Bozal Zahol has been claiming them for his uses in the Shrine of Kyuss below.

Two of these cells are empty, but one (area **7b**) holds a prisoner. The prisoner is a nameless, deaf-mute, insane tramp (CN human commoner 2), captured by Raknian's bodyguards and scheduled to be sent down to Bozal Zahol soon. The vagabond is insane, and cannot answer questions coherently as a result. Still, the poor soul can be communicated with if the PCs can make a DC 20 Bluff check. The vagabond is terrified—just two days ago he saw Bozal Zahol enter the cell opposite and place a Kyuss worm on the face of the prisoner kept there. That prisoner's transformation into a spawn of Kyuss (that Bozal then promptly controlled) shattered the vagabond's already shaky mind. If the PCs communicate with him, he simply draws crude illustrations of worms in the dirt and dust of his cell floor and points at the cell opposite. He saw Bozal enter and leave death row from area **8**, and not knowing of the secret door there, he's convinced the tiefling priest and his new undead minion are still in that room.

Remove blindness/deafness restores the vagabond's hearing and thus removes the need to make a Bluff check to communicate with him. It takes a *heal* or a *greater restoration* to completely cure the vagabond, in which case he tearfully thanks the PCs and tells them everything he knows about the activites going on in the arena before fleeing.

Development: In the early morning hours of Day 4, Bozal Zahol visits this cell with a preserved Kyuss worm, transforms the tramp into a spawn, and returns with his new minion to the shrine below.

8. Wine Cellar (EL 7)

This small cellar contains several barrels and hundreds of glass bottles on shelving on the south wall. The air is thick with the smell of vinegar.

This room stores wine and other, stronger spirits. An open barrel near the east wall contains vinegar, and its smell fills the room (handy in covering up the unpleasant odors coming from the Shrine of Kyuss).

A carefully-hidden swiveling wall section in the northwest corner can be discovered with a DC 30 Search check. This secret door opens onto a landing at the top of a narrow flight of stairs that leads to area **25**. The foul rotten smell of the shrine of Kyuss is immediatley apparent once anyone steps into this stairway.

Trap: A *greater glyph of warding* guards the upper landing of this secret staircase.

Greater Glyph of Warding Trap (slay living): CR 7; spell; spell trigger; no reset; spell effect (*glyph of warding* [*slay living*], 11th-level cleric, DC 19 partial); Search DC 31; Disable Device DC 31.

9. Combustibles Storage

This storage room contains a half-dozen stirrup-vases and scores of stoppered clay flasks. The distinct odor of tar hangs heavily in the air.

The stirrup-vases are full of tar and clay flasks contain alchemist's fire. There are 60 flasks in all.

10. Mess Hall

Four columns support the vaulted ceiling of this large hall. Three long tables with stools provide dining space for about forty people.

During the day, this hall is used as a canteen by the arena attendants to take their meals.

11. Guardroom (EL 9)

This elongated, irregular room features a central square pillar, a living area with two round tables and a narrow passage in the northwest corner. Three copper braziers in the corners light the room.

Arena Caverns
The Coenoby, The Titan's House, and The Old Caves
G
Up to manhole at street level
to stream
Up to the Service Level (Area 5)
F
Up to chimney at street level
17
16
Up to Shrine of Kyuss (Area 30)
22
23
to stream
walled in drainage well
Up to Shrine of Kyuss (Area 24)
21
to stream
18
20
19
N
To Ghoul Warren
Area with shallow water
Tight submerged passage
One square = 5 feet

The passage in the northwest corner is barely 4 feet wide and leads to a small door painted in blue. Behind the door is an unremarkable and reasonably clean lavatory.

Creatures: During the day, arena attendants use this room for breaks. During the night, a patrol of four of Raknian's bodyguards are stationed here. Once every hour, two of them patrol the surrounding chambers (this takes 10 minutes).

Bodyguards (4): hp 42 each; see page 38.

12. Pantry

This small room contains craters and jars of all sizes and shapes. Several dozen sausages hanging from the ceiling emanate an intense and pleasant smell of smoked meat.

Preserved foods of all kinds (cheese, sausages, honey, and hardtack) are stored here.

13. Dormitory

This spartan dormitory contains four beds and four wooden cupboards with three shelves each. Four rucksacks sit on the shelves.

During the day, the four bodyguards stationed in area **11** sleep here. The rucksacks contain unremarkable personal effects and belongings.

14. Kitchen

A large angular fireplace dominates this well-equipped, clean kitchen, where several metal grills and spits are neatly arranged. A circular well sits in the southeast corner. A passage to the east leads to a small door, where a few, half-empty sacks of flour are stacked on the floor.

The arena attendants prepare meals here for themselves, the prisoners, and the animals in area **6**.

15. Circular Hallway

A series of identical stairwells, accessible through archways closed by steel gates, are spaced evenly along the inner wall of this hallway; each of these stairwells leads down to area **23** and once led up to the arena above (although they've all been blocked with stone). Other, lesser archways lead out from the central ring to narrow, dusty and neglected tunnels used for storage. At your option, a secret passage in one of these tunnels can lead to a basement within the walls of the Free City.

Arena Caverns

The arena caverns are the deepest level of the complex, about 30 feet under the Service Level. This is a vast and varied complex, partly natural and partly worked stone. The caverns are connected to the Free City sewer system and are crossed by an underground stream which surfaces here and there, forming shallow pools of cold water. In most cases, the subterranean stream travels in tight 2-foot-wide submerged passages.

With the exception of the Coenoby (area **16**), no guards patrol this area.

16. The Coenoby

This enormous cave resembles some sort of underground village. The cave walls are finely hewn and the floor paved with smooth slabs of stone. Many artificial and natural pillars support the relatively low ceiling fifteen feet above. Wooden doors on the cave's walls lead to a circle of underground dwellings, the lodgings of gladiators during the Champion's Games. A pair of similar doors on the north wall leads to a kitchen and an infirmary. An underground stream runs in the middle, crossed by a wooden bridge that leads to a dining area with two long tables. The relatively fresh air, murals of famous gladiators on the walls, and the soft illumination provided by amber-colored light globes hanging from the ceiling makes this cave a true marvel of underground architecture.

The Coenoby was once an ancient catacomb similar to the nearby Titan's House (area **18**). Three years ago, Raknian remodeled the Coenoby into the subterranean guesthouse it is today. Especially designed for the Champion's Games, the Coenoby can accommodate the twenty-four starting teams with reasonable comfort.

Two groups of arena wardens are supposed to keep an eye on the Coenoby during the Champion's Games, but after day 1 has come and gone, the majority of the guards here are tired and easily distracted, when they're even present at all. Raknian himself is so distracted by the coming sacrifice and the chaos of organizing the Games that he doesn't have time to watch the PCs as closely as he would like.

17. Kitchen and Infirmary

These two adjoining rooms, a kitchen and an infirmary, are used to cook meals for the hungry and administer first aid to the wounded.

Both rooms are clean and well equipped for their use, although nothing special or valuable is left here during the night. A sink on the north wall of the kitchen connects to the sewer system of the Free City through a tiny drainage pipe. The cowl of the fireplace in the northwest corner has a very large flue, which could be ascended by a PC to reach the surface (area **F**).

18. The Titan's House

This huge cave resembles the Coenoby, but is in a state of century-old abandonment. It looks like a surface structure once stood here, a cluster of stone houses that were buried under a million tons of rubble a long time ago. In the labyrinth of ceiling-high sections of ruined walls, the only remarkable feature is the idol that gives this cave its name, the ten-foot-high, alabaster statue of a powerful giant armed with a mattock. Now the silent guardian of the Titan's House, the statue stands in an almost completely enclosed space in the northeast part of the cave.

The source of this catacomb of stone buildings predates even the Free City itself. Built by an ancient cult of demon-worshipers who performed human sacrifices on a hillock above, all that remains are these well-built but empty ruins.

This catacomb is frequently visited by gladiators staying in the Coenoby after the first day, as the rooms are a safe and relatively private place for meditation or for more carnal pursuits. The cave floor slopes down to the south where a 10-foot-deep pool of water is located. A submerged tunnel here once led up to area **19**, a cavern that leads to a large network of ghoul warrens to the southeast. Raknian had his men install a large stone plug in this submerged tunnel to keep the ghouls out. The plug is visible from the surface with a DC 15 Spot check.

Stone Plug: 1 foot thick; Hardness 8; hp 180; Break DC 34.

19. Ghastly Convention (EL 9)

Rubble and old bones of humans and animals clutter the floor of this fifteen-foot-high cave. A terrible stench of decay hangs here.

This cave was once used by ancient cultists as an ossuary for the bones of sacrificed victims. The cave has been frequented by corpse-eating undead for centuries as a result, and is in fact the northwesternmost portion of a large and tangled warren filled with ghouls, ghasts, and more terrible undead. The extent and exact occupants of these tunnels are beyond the scope of this adventure, but provide an interesting (and dangerous) optional route of entry for PCs who don't want to take the gladiator route to infiltrate the arena.

Creatures: A pack of ghasts dwells here now. Zahol encountered the ghasts several months ago and struck a deal with them—in return for his disposing of nice ripe dead bodies in this chamber on a weekly basis, the ghasts serve him as guards to make sure no one approaches the areas to the northwest. There are nine ghasts here.

Ghasts (9): hp 29 each; *Monster Manual* 119.

20. Pool Cave

A shallow pool of water occupies the southern part of thus fifteen-foot-high cave. Several geometric graffiti are etched here and there on the walls.

This cavern is empty, but any amount of loud noise or light is likely to attract the ghouls from area **19** if they haven't yet been encountered. The river leading to the west is not completely submerged, and as it is only 3 feet deep and flows at a languid pace can be easily navigated by most humanoids.

21. Sewage Grotto (EL 9)

This low-ceilinged grotto is completely flooded by murky, foul-smelling water. Piles of drenched rubbish, debris, and rotting flotsam bob everywhere. The dirty water flows out constantly from a sloping sewer conduit on the north wall. Thick sheets of rancid-looking slime cling to the ceiling in pale yellow gobs.

This grotto is where the refuse thrown in the pit of area **24** is dropped after a slow roll down a sloping conduit to the north. The water is fairly shallow at only 1 or 2 feet deep, but the uneven ground makes for difficult terrain. The ceiling is only 10 feet high.

Creatures: With the help of his alkilith ally (see area **30**), Zahol has captured and contained a group of four ochre jellies. These oozes cling to the ceiling of this cave, and can slither about with ease, reaching anything from above with their pseudopods. They'll pursue prey relentlessly from this chamber.

Ochre Jellies (4): hp 69; *Monster Manual* 203.

Treasure: A DC 25 Search of this room uncovers a severed arm on which remains a *gauntlet of rust*.

22. Sewer Collector

This wretched space is filthy beyond imagination, being a collector for several drainage pipes of the arena complex above. The walls and ceiling are riddled with sewage spouts of all sizes, and rancid water constantly flows out of them.

This collector is accessible from the Free City sewer system and a nearby sewer access (area **G**). Zahol's personal lavatory (area **30**) is located directly above the room, and its 6-inch-wide drain pipe drops vertically into it.

The passage southeast of here once connected to a central drainage well, but it has been filled with rubble when Raknian and Bozal created the chamber for the ulgurstasta (area **32**).

23. Circular Hallway

This 15-foot-high circular hallway corresponds to the one above (area **15**). A 10-foot-wide passage leads east to the Coenoby (area **16**).

Shrine of Kyuss

This part of the complex is situated below the Service Level but above the caverns. It originally served as a secret shrine for worship of Kord by the original builders of the arena, but when the above-ground structure changed ownership and was rebuilt into its current configuration, knowledge of this hidden shrine passed from view. Raknian discovered the shrine not long after he became director, and when he solidified his alliance with Bozal Zahol, he allowed the Kyuss cultist to take control of the shrine and make it his own.

Today, the entire place reeks of a charnel house and is dark, except where otherwise noted. All the doors of this level are modern fixtures of strong wood, and open smoothly.

24. Pit Room

This circular room has a five-foot-wide pit in the middle of the floor. An oil lamp hanging from the center of the ceiling illuminates the pit.

The pit drops 15 feet down to a sewer conduct that slopes toward area **21** through a ramp of tiny waterfalls. Zahol uses the pit to get rid of rubbish and to throw food to his ochre jellies. Climbing the pit's slippery walls requires a DC 25 Climb check.

25. Coffin Storage (EL 8)

This square room contains three plain wooden coffins. Two coffins lie along the south wall, while a third has been placed in the north part of the room. Several empty sacks are piled near the third coffin.

These coffins are used to transport and contain bodies delivered to the shrine from Raknian; they are all currently empty but show signs of heavy use. The sacks are empty, but contain traces of sand.

Creatures: Three spawn of Kyuss guard this chamber. These nasty undead were once prisoners, but Bozal Zahol claimed them and transformed them into spawn using Kyuss worms. A spawn of Kyuss resembles a nearly skeletal zombie, save that it is infested with writhing green worms that bulge and drip from its eyes and mouth.

Spawn of Kyuss (3) **CR 5**

CE Medium undead

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Init –1; **Senses** darkvision 60 ft.; Listen +0, Spot +6

Aura fear (40 ft. radius, DC 14)

Languages Common

AC 11, touch 9, flat-footed 11

hp 29 (4 HD); fast healing 5

Immune undead traits

Fort +1, **Ref** +0, **Will** +4

Weakness curative transformation

Spd 30 ft.

Melee slam +7 (1d6+6 plus worm and Kyuss' gift) or touch +6 melee touch (0 plus worm)

Ranged worm +1 ranged touch (special)

Base Atk +2; **Grp** +6

Special Atk create spawn, fear aura, Kyuss' gift

Abilities Str 18, Dex 9, Con —, Int 6, Wis 11, Cha 15

SQ turn resistance +2

Feats Toughness, Weapon Focus (slam)

Skills Hide +0, Jump +7, Move Silently +3, Spot +6

Create Spawn (Su): If a spawn of Kyuss hits with a slam attack, as a free action it may transfer a worm from its body to that of the target (it may also do this as a touch attack or have a worm leap as a ranged touch attack with a range of 10 feet). The worm is a Fine vermin with AC 10 and 1 hit point. During this time, the worm can be killed by normal damage or the touch of silver. On the spawn's next turn, the worm burrows into the flesh of its target (creatures with natural armor +5 or more are immune), making its way toward the brain and causing 1 hit point of damage per round until it reaches the brain 1d4+1 rounds later. When inside a victim, the worm can be destroyed by *remove curse* or *remove disease* (or spells that duplicate these effects); *dispel evil* or *neutralize poison* delays its progress for 10d6 minutes. These spells affect multiple worms within the same victim. Worms cannot survive outside of a host for more than 1 round. A DC 20 Heal check extracts the worm and kills it. Once the worm reaches the victim's brain, it inflicts 1d2 points of temporary Intelligence damage per round until it is destroyed or the victim reaches 0 Intelligence, at which point the host dies and rises as a spawn of Kyuss 1d6+4 rounds later. Small, Medium, and Large creatures become spawn of Kyuss as described above; smaller creatures quickly putrefy rather than becoming spawn, larger creatures become normal zombies. Spawn (and spawned zombies) are not under the control of their parent but usually follow after whatever spwan created them. Any creature that touches a spawn with an unarmed strike or other natural weapon is immediately attacked by 1d4 worms.

Curative Transformation (Ex): *Remove curse* or *remove disease* (or more powerful effects that duplicate these spells) transforms a spawn of Kyuss into a normal zombie.

Fear Aura (Su): Continuous effect in a 40-ft. radius, as a *fear* spell (panicked), Will negates DC 14. A creature that makes its save against the aura is immune to it for 24 hours. Caster level 7th. The DC is Charisma-based.

Kyuss' Gift (Su): Supernatural disease, incubation time 1 day. The disease deals 1d6 Constitution and 1d4 Wisdom damage per day, manifesting as rotting flesh and dementia. Healing magic has only half effect on the victim, though *remove disease* cures it normally. Fortitude DC 12.

26. Pump Room

The north part of this room is occupied by a piece of ancient machinery built of stone and metal, but seems not to have been in use for centuries. The machinery is connected to the northeast wall by a very large pipe.

A DC 20 Knowledge (architecture and engineering) check reveals that this machine was once a magical water pump capable of siphoning enormous quantities of water into a nearby conduit (the central drainage well under the arena). Although the machine is broken, it still connects to the well (area **32**) by a horizontal, two-foot-wide lead pipe. A Small PC (or a Medium one making a DC 30 Escape Artist check) can clamber into the machinery and traverse the pipe to an opening in the wall of area **32**. At that point, the PC finds further progress blocked by the force sphere created by the *Apostolic Scrolls* (see sidebar). Although the PC likely cannot progress further, he is nonetheless presented with a terrifying view of the semi-dormant ulgurstasta within.

27. Training Hall (EL 11)

The air in this large hall is particularly noisome. The northern wall is almost completely

covered by the remains of a wooden bookshelf, whose contents have long ago crumbled to dust. The southern part of the aisle is occupied by dusty pieces of ancient, ruined machinery that may have once comprised sets of semi-automated combat dummies.

This chamber was once used by the faithful of Kord as a training hall, but now their once-impressive dueling machines are ruined and broken.

Creatures: Bozal Zahol uses this large chamber as a "barracks" for the undead he's created since he moved in. Raknian suspects Bozal has been stockpiling an undead army, but as long as he can deliver on his promises, Raknian doesn't really care.

Currently, this chamber contains a single mohrg and six spawn of Kyuss. The undead wait patiently for commands, but are intelligent enough to recognize intruders for what they are and attack at once. One of the spawn of Kyuss breaks away from combat to shamble north to warn Bozal while the remaining undead do their best to ruin the PCs.

Mohrg: hp 91; *Monster Manual* 189.

Spawn of Kyuss (6): hp 29 each; see page 54.

28. Altar Room (EL 11)

Two braziers in the northeast and southeast corners light this rectangular room. A simple altar of stone sits in the middle of the east wall, facing a large set of stone double doors to the west. On the altar is a scroll, which glows with an unnatural green light. A writhing green beam of light emanates out of these scrolls to strike the doors to the west, bathing them in the same green glow.

After Loris Raknian sealed his unholy deal with Bozal Zahol and procured a copy of the *Apostolic Scrolls* from the illithid Zyrxog, Bozal used a ritual in the scroll to conjure a massive undead monster called an ulgurstasta from its lair far to the north in the Wormcrawl Fissure into a special underground chamber nearby (area **32**). The ritual created a special containment sphere of force around the creature, putting it into a semi-dormant state that not only protects it from outside molestation but allows it to grow in size and power until the right moment, much like a chrysalis. The glowing beam of light is a manifestation of the link between the *Apostolic Scrolls* and the sphere of force in area **32**; it can be passed through without ill effect, and blocking its path does nothing to interrupt the effect. The *Apostolic Scrolls* themselves are under a *temporal stasis* effect, and cannot be moved, damaged, or otherwise interacted with until the entire effect is removed. See area **32** for details on how the PCs might be able to undo this effect.

Bozal has placed an *unhallow* spell in this chamber, which creates a zone of *silence* for all non-worshipers of Kyuss in this room.

Creature: If the PCs arrive here during the night, Bozal Zahol stands before the altar, meditating on the *Apostolic Scrolls* and communicating telepathically with the semi-dormant ulgurstasta to learn its unfathomable dark secrets.

Bozal Zahol is a middle-aged tiefling with a flaccid and misshapen figure. His fiendish ancestry is evident in the unnaturally green, almost fluorescent color of his eyes, his twitching tail, the vestigial horns on his brow, and his hoofed feet. Zahol expects the cult of Kyuss to grow considerably after the Age of Worms begins, and plans on being one of the leaders of the cult.

Bozal Zahol **CR 11**

Male tiefling cleric 11 (Kyuss)
NE Medium outsider (native)
Monster Manual 209
Init +0; **Senses** darkvision 60 ft.; Listen +3, Spot +3
Languages Abyssal, Common, Infernal

AC 18, touch 10, flat-footed 18
hp 64 (11 HD)
Resist cold 5, electricity 5, fire 5
Fort +8, **Ref** +3, **Will** +12

Spd 20 ft.
Melee +1 *unholy club* +11/+6 (1d6+2)
Base Atk +8; **Grp** +9
Atk Options smite 1/day (+4 on attack rolls, +11 damage)
Special Atk death touch 1/day (11d6), rebuke undead 4/day (+3, 2d6+12, 11th)
Combat Gear *potion of cure serious wounds*, scroll of *restoration*, scroll of *heal*, *brooch of shielding* (35 points), *wand of inflict moderate wounds* (32 charges)

Spells Prepared (CL 11th, ranged touch +8)
6th—*antilife shell*, *harm*[D] (DC 20)
5th—*slay living*[D] (DC 19), *spell resistance*, *summon monster V*
4th—*cure critical wounds*, *death ward*[D], *divine power*, *summon monster IV*
3rd—*contagion*[D] (DC 17), *blindness/deafness* (DC 17), *dispel magic*, *invisibility purge*, *speak with dead*, *summon monster III*
2nd—*death knell*[D] (DC 16), *cure moderate wounds*, *resist energy*, *shatter* (DC 15), *summon monster II*, *undetectable alignment*
1st—*command* (DC 14), *cure light wounds* (2), *doom* (DC 15), *inflict light wounds*[D] (DC 15), *protection from good*, *sanctuary* (DC 14)
0—*cure minor wounds*, *detect magic*, *detect poison*, *guidance*, *read magic*, *resistance*
D: domain spell; Domains: Death, Destruction
Spell-Like Abilities (CL 11th)
1/day—darkness

Abilities Str 12, Dex 10, Con 12, Int 12, Wis 17, Cha 12
SQ spontaneous casting (inflict spells)
Feats Combat Casting, Iron Will, Spell Focus (necromancy), Weapon Focus (club)
Skills Bluff +3, Concentration +10, Craft (painting) +6, Diplomacy +6, Hide –2, Knowledge (arcana) +6, Knowledge (history) +6, Knowledge (religion) +9, Spellcraft +8
Possessions combat gear, *+1 chainmail*, *+1 light fortification light wooden shield*, *+1 unholy club*, *periapt of health*, *a strand of prayer beads*, jade holy symbol of Kyuss worth 100 gp, ring of keys

Tactics: If Bozal has advance warning that the PCs are nearby, he immediately casts *antilife shell*. Once this is up, he casts *death ward*, *spell resistance*, *invisibility purge*, *resist energy* (of a type the PCs have used in any gladiatorial battles so far), and *shield of faith*.

Bozal then moves toward the sound of battle, at which point he begins summoning monsters to add to the fray. If forced into melee, he starts by casting *divine power* and then fights until brought below 20 hit points, at which point he uses his *darkness* spell-like ability to retreat, heal, and return to combat. If Bozal is reduced to fewer than 5 hit points, he loses his nerve and takes a standard action to release the ulgurstasta in area **32**, cursing the PCs at the same time and promising them "the true wrath of Kyuss" for forcing his hand early.

29. Bozal Zahol's Room (EL 10 or 11)

A central pillar of green marble carved in the likeness of a segmented worm supports the ceiling of this square room. The room is dimly lit by a single incense burner that sheds a sweet, fruity aroma. The room is lined with woolen tapestries depicting coiling green worms, and contains a bed, an armchair, and a cupboard. Near the bed is a small nightstand and an ornate, elongated trunk.

The cupboard contains the personal effects and clothing of a traveling cleric, including an ebony walking stick, a dark traveling outfit, and a rucksack. On the bedside table are a hooded lantern, a jug of red wine, a clay cup, and a pair of round goggles with smoky quartz for lenses. The trunk is locked (Open Locks DC 25) and trapped.

The trunk is an art object both disgusting and fascinating, and emanates an aura of abjuration and necromancy if subjected to *detect magic*. Made of darkwood and bound with steel, the trunk measures 36x18x18 inches. A steel plaque representing a screaming skull infested by worms, the unholy symbol of Kyuss, is nailed to the lid. The side panels are painted in tones of black and green with a cycle of apocalyptic images that runs around the trunk like a frieze. The images are divided into two horizontal strips, underground and aboveground, by a cutaway of the earth's crust. Underground, the horrible figure of a man made of worms lies imprisoned in a huge stone monolith. The figure has been represented in perspective on all the trunk's four sides. Huge green worms writhe in the surrounding caverns and break through the cavern's crust to invade the aboveground part of the paintings, where a sickly green light illuminates a blasted landscape. There, the writhing worms tower over a population of monstrous undead and naked, terrified victims.

Bozal Zahol

Creature: If the PCs explore the complex during the day, they find Bozal Zahol resting in his room, either lying on the bed in a nightmare-filled sleep (50%) or relaxing in the armchair and "sharing" cup of wine with the room's other occupant (50%).

When Raknian murdered Lahaka a year ago, he called on Bozal for aid in destroying the body. Bozal was only too happy to do so, and told Raknian later he destroyed her body by feeding her to the alkilith in area **30**. In fact, Bozal did no such thing. He instead animated Lahaka as a zombie as a strange sort of insurance policy. He commanded the zombie to head up to Raknian's Palace if she doesn't see Bozal for 24 hours. Bozal wasn't sure at first how much he could trust Raknian, so if the director turned on him this zombie would soon thereafter show up in his house to cause possibly irreparable political damage, depending on whom she attacked first. Until such a time, Bozal uses Lahaka's zombie as a silent drinking partner and servant. An investigation of the zombie (DC 15 Heal check or DC 20 Search check) reveals that she was killed by strangulation; even now, a year after her death, her undead flesh still bears the angry red indentation on her neck from Raknian's distinctive serpent-styled *ring of protection* +2. Anyone who's interacted with Raknian can make the connection with a successful DC 21 Wisdom check.

Bozal Zahol: hp 64; see page 55.

Human Zombie: hp 16; *Monster Manual* 266.

Trap: The trunk's steel lock was warded by Zahol's mentor (a monstrous high priest of Kyuss) with a particularly horrific magical trap. Anyone who opens the chest without uttering a complex prayer to Kyuss must make a DC 20 Will save. Success means that the character only takes 2 points of Constitution damage as a foul green worm bursts from his flesh near where he touched the chest to drop onto the floor and turn to goo. On a failed save, the lock snaps shut and the character's body winks out of the Material Plane, leaving all clothing and equipment behind. Immediately after, a tiny representation of the character, naked and helpless, appears on one of the trunk's side panels as one of the victims of the undead horde. While trapped in the chest's painting, the character experiences continuous, sanity-blasting nightmares, ensnared in the writhing dreams of Kyuss. This is a necromantic effect.

Each hour the character remains trapped, he takes 1d4 points of Intelligence, Wisdom, and Charisma drain. When one of these ability scores reach zero, the character's image on the trunk animates long enough to be eaten by the worms, and is then gone. The trapped character can be freed with a successful *dispel magic* against caster level 20th. Alternately, antimagic, *dispel evil*, *freedom*, *miracle*, *Mordenkainen's disjunction*, or *wish* cast on the trunk can rescue the character—once the image is gone, only *miracle*, *true resurrection*, or *wish* can return him to life. Upon being rescued from the terrible trap, the character reappears next to the box, naked and and unconscious.

The trapped trunk can be disabled with a DC 35 Disable Device check; doing so frees any trapped characters as detailed above. Destroying the chest also frees any trapped characters, but each time a creature damages

the chest (from any range), it must make a DC 20 Will save as if he tried to open it.

Dreams of Kyuss Trap: CR 10; Hardness 8; hp 60; Break DC 30; magic device; touch trigger; automatic reset; Will DC 20 to take 2 Con damage and resist above effects; Search DC 30; Disable Device DC 35.

Treasure: The trunk contains a bag of 300 gp, four deep green spinels worth 100 gp each, three aquamarines worth 500 gp each, a *potion of cure moderate wounds*, a scroll of *death ward*, two scrolls of *ethereal jaunt*, three doses of *dust of tracelessness*, seven blocks of exotic incense worth 200 gp each, two blocks of *incense of meditation*, a *wand of restoration* with 36 charges, and a *Muryland's spoon*. Lastly, three vials containing *oil of gentile repose* each contain a Kyuss worm. These worms are in stasis—if exposed to the air they live for one round and try to infest any living creature (or corpse) they can reach.

30. Kyuss's Visage (EL 14)

A brazier in the northwest corner lights this rectangular room. A green and black checkered curtain hanging from a steel bar fixed near the ceiling conceals the south wall.

A swiveling section of wall in the middle of the north wall can be found with a DC 25 Search check. The passage beyond this secret door leads to a long corridor that ends in another secret door in the basement of Raknian's palace (area **D**).

The curtain itself is made of magically enhanced spider silk; creatures on the southern side can look through the curtain as if through thick fog (concealment applies to anything on the north side), whereas creatures from the north cannot see through the curtain at all. It conceals the southern section of the room where a six-foot-tall black earthenware urn stands near the middle of the south wall. The south wall is completely filled with a mosaic of tiny green tiles depicting the horrible skull of Kyuss. The urn is the resting place of an amorphous demon: an alkilith summoned by Zahol with a *planar ally* spell.

Creature: The alkilith has been used by Zahol to "domesticate" the ochre jellies in area **21**, and has been stationed as a guard in this room. The demon is not too happy with its servitude, and does not leave this room to help Zahol anywhere else in the complex even if it hears the sounds of combat. The alkilith surges out of its urn the instant it sees or hears anything on the other side of the curtain.

ALKILITH DEMON **CR 14**

CE Medium outsider (chaotic, evil, extraplanar, tanar'ri)
Fiend Folio 46
Init +7; **Senses** darkvision 60 ft.; Listen +19, Spot +19
Languages Abyssal, Common; telepahty 100 ft.

AC 23, touch 17, flat-footed 16; can't be flanked
hp 82 (11 HD); **DR** 15/good, half damage from bludgeoning attacks
Immune acid, critical hits, electricity, harmful gas, paralysis, poison, polymorph, sleep, stench, stunning
Resist cold 10, fire 10; **SR** 23
Fort +10, **Ref** +14, **Will** +10

Spd 40 ft.
Melee 4 slams +19 (1d8+3 plus acid)
Base Atk +11; **Grp** +14
Special Atk cloudkill form, *summon tanar'ri*
Spell-Like Abilities (CL 11th, ranged touch +18)
At will—*contagion* (DC 20), *desecrate*, *detect magic*, *dispel magic*, *enervation*, *greater teleport* (self plus maximum load of objects only), *hold monster* (DC 21), *magic circle against good*, *stinking cloud* (DC 20), *wall of ice* (DC 21)
3/day—*cone of cold* (DC 22), *unholy blight* (DC 21)

Abilities Str 16, Dex 25, Con 16, Int 14, Wis 17, Cha 15
SQ command ooze
Feats Alertness, Combat Reflexes, Weapon Finesse, Weapon Focus (slam)
Skills Bluff +16, Concentration +17, Diplomacy +20, Disguise +2 (+4 acting), Escape Artist +21, Hide +21, Intimidate +18, Listen +19, Move Silently +21, Sense Motive +17, Spot +19

Acid (Su): Anyone struck by the alkilith's slam must make a DC 18 Fortitude save or take an additional 1d6 points of acid damage. This acid damage continues over the next 1d6 rounds. Additionally, each time a character fails a Fortitude save against this attack, one of his items (determined randomly as if he had rolled a natural 1 on his saving throw) suffers the acid damage as well.
***Command Ooze* (Sp)**: An alkilith can control the actions of any ooze within 60 feet as a free action. The ooze is allowed a DC 17 Will save to resist.
Cloudkill Form (Su): As a full-round action, an alkilith can assume the form of a cloud of noxious green vapor. The alkilith is gaseous (as if by the *gaseous form* spell) in this form, and anyone inside the cloud suffers as if from a *cloudkill* spell at caster level 11th. Returning to solid form is a full-round action.
***Summon Tanar'ri* (Sp)**: Once per day, an alkilith may attempt to summon 1 hezrou with a 50% chance of success.

Tactics: The alkilith's first action when it sees trouble is to prepare an action to use *cone of cold* once anything pulls aside the curtain. Otherwise, it pulls the curtain aside itself once at least three people are in the northern portion of the room (and thus can be exposed to the trap). Its first action then is to fill the room with a *stinking cloud*. The alkilith then uses *wall of ice* to block ranged fighters and spellcasters from targeting it and uses *enervation* and additional *cones of cold* at anyone still nearby. It continues using spell-like abilities until attacked in melee, at which point it fights back with its acidic slams. If reduced to fewer than 25 hit points, the alkilith teleports into the passageway to the north just beyond the secret door. It then assumes cloudkill form and seeps back into this room to try to poison the characters. The strictures of the *planar ally* spell prevent the alkilith from fleeing completely, but if brought below 10 hit points it teleports to area **28** to seek out Bozal for healing. If he's dead, the demon tries to collect the ochre jellies from area **22** for reinforcements. If this fails, it returns to patrol the shrine of Kyuss after attempting to summon a hezrou to aid it, hoping the PCs have left but ready to fight to the death if it encounters them again.

Trap: A *symbol of fear* has been incorporated into the mosaic on the wall. Zahol incorporated a password that the alkilith uses to avoid being subjected to the symbol.

Symbol of Fear: CR 7; spell; spell trigger; no reset; spell effect (*symbol of fear*, 11th-level cleric, DC 20 Will negates); Search DC 31; Disable Device DC 31.

Treasure: The pinpoints of green light in the demigod's eye sockets on the mosaic have been rendered with two emeralds worth 1,000 gp each. The spidersilk curtain is worth 250 gp.

31. Lavatory

This small room contains a latrine and a porcelain washbasin. A silver pitcher lies on the floor near the washbasin.

The latrine drain drops directly over a collector room of the Free City sewers below (area **22**).

Treasure: The silver pitcher is of elven manufacture and is worth 30 gp.

32. Ulgurstasta Chamber

A huge, vaulted chamber lies ahead, dimly illuminated by a green light. There a colossal, disgusting behemoth similar to a gigantic, yellowish grub lies on a heap of rubble, bones, and rotting foulness. The creature seems immersed in a magic slumber, and its horrid body seems to pulsate with an abominable, ever-increasing power.

Use the description above if the PCs get a glimpse of the chamber from area **26**. If the PCs approach the chamber from area **28**, read the following to describe the sealed portal outside the chamber.

A large portal of stone, covered with the obscene depiction of an orgy of dead, worm-ridden corpses blocks the passage. In the middle of the macabre mass, a carving of the horrible skull of Kyuss utters a silent scream of triumph.

Note that the portal is within the containment sphere that protects the ulgurstasta, and cannot touched by anyone but Bozal Zahol (see "The Apostolic Scrolls" sidebar).

This containment sphere created by the *Apostolic Scrolls* is a shell with a diameter of 20 feet that protects the monster as its power increases. The shell is impervious to all attacks and most magic (including dimensional and planar effects), and exists both in the Material Plane and Ethereal Plane.

The ulgurstasta within the sphere has already achieved its full growth—all that it waits for now is the moment when Bozag releases it into the arena above. If the PCs release it earlier (see the sidebar on how this task can be accomplished), it roars in rage and immediately attacks anyone nearby.

Apostle of Kyuss **CR 13**

Enhanced ulgurstasta

CE Gargantuan undead

Fiend Folio 180

Init +6; **Senses** darkvision 60 ft.; Listen +23, Spot +23

Aura 40-ft. (tendrils)

Language Common (cannot speak)

AC 23, touch 14, flat-footed 20

hp 204 (17 HD); **DR** 10/magic piercing

Immune acid, cold, undead traits

SR 21

Fort +7, **Ref** +8, **Will** +13

Spd 70 ft.

Melee 2 bites +16 (3d6+16)

Space 20 ft.; **Reach** 20 ft.

Base Atk +8; **Grp** +29

Atk Options Cleave, Great Cleave, Power Attack, improved grab (bite), swallow whole

Special Atk breath weapon, necromantic acid, spawn of Kyuss

Abilities Str 32, Dex 15, Con —, Int 18, Wis 16, Cha 19

Feats Cleave, Combat Reflexes, Great Cleave, Great Fortitude, Improved Initiative, Power Attack

Skills Intimidate +24, Knowledge (arcana) +24, Knowledge (history) +24, Knowledge (religion) +24, Knowledge (the planes) +24, Listen +23, Search +24, Spot +23

Breath Weapon (Su): 1/day; 60-foot cone of necromantic acid; 3d6 Constitution drain (or 1d6 Constitution damage with a DC 18 Reflex save). Creatures killed by this attack animate in the next round as spawn of Kyuss (if humanoid) or skeletons under the ulgurstasta's control. Dormant undead in the ulgurstasta's

gut are vomited forth and animate as well at this time (this ulgurstasta has 2 spawn of Kyuss and 6 skeletons created before its unholy enhancement in its gut at this time). For 24 hours after it uses its breath weapon, no creatures swallowed by the ulgurstasta take damage from necromantic acid.

Necromantic Acid (Su): A swallowed victim takes 1d8 points of Constitution drain each round, and animates as a spawn of Kyuss (if humanoid) or skeleton upon death. Undead created in this manner remain dormant until the ulgurstasta vomits them up.

Spawn of Kyuss (Su): As a full-round action, an ulgurstasta can vomit dormant undead in its gut. For 1d6 rounds after being regurgitated, these undead are covered with necromantic acid and deal 1 point of Constitution drain with each successful attack in addition to their normal damage.

Swallow Whole (Ex): An ulgurstasta can swallow a single creature that is at least one size category smaller than itself by making a successful grapple check against a creature it has already grappled. Once inside, the victim is bathed in necromantic acid (see above). A successful grapple check allows the swallowed creature to climb out of the stomach and return to the creature's maw, where another successful grapple check is needed to escape. Alternately, a creature can try to cut its way out with a light slashing weapon. Dealing a total of at least 25 points of damage to the stomach (AC 19) in this way creates an opening large enough to permit escape. Once a single swallowed creature exits, muscular action closes the hole. An ulgurstasta's gut can hold 2 Huge, 8 Large, 32 Medium, or 128 Small or smaller foes.

Tendrils (Ex): An angry ulgurstasta extrudes a whipping storm of millions of thin tendrils to a range of 40 feet. This storm of tendrils renders the ulgurstasta immune to nonmagical ranged weapon attacks and deals 1d12 slashing damage each round to any creature within 40 feet. Creatures in this area other than the ulgurstasta take a –2 penalty on attack rolls.

Tactics: If released, the ulgurstasta becomes enraged. It cannot escape into area **28**, but attacks anyone it can reach from area **32**. If it can't reach anyone, it surges upward through the stone between the top of this chamber and the battlefield of the arena above. The roof above has been weakened by Bozal, and it's only a DC 24 Strength check to burst through into the arena above; with the ulgurstasta's +11 Strength modifier, it'll escape into the outside world soon enough. If it does, it immediately runs amok in the arena and into the Free City beyond if not stopped.

The Apostolic Scrolls

This minor artifact of the cult of Kyuss consists of a 5-foot-long sheet of vellum sewn to a pair of darkwood rollers. Several copies of the scrolls are thought to exist, and all have the same purpose—providing the user with the ability to contact one of the "Apostles of Kyuss" so it can perform a mass sacrifice in honor of its master. The scrolls are written in Abyssal and contain a long and complex litany filled with horrific imagery and descriptions. Performing this ritual takes 24 hours, but it can be split into three 8-hour shifts over the course of three days.

Once activated, the scrolls transport an ulgurstasta from the Wormcrawl Fissure to a single point within 100 feet of the scrolls as directed by the reader. The scrolls create a special containment sphere to protect the ulgurstasta during its growth period. The sphere is a 20-foot radius sphere of force similar to a *wall of force*. The scrolls themselves are protected by *temporal stasis*, and the two are connected by a beam of writhing green light. Each day that passes, the ulgurstasta gains 1d8 hit points, up to the maximum allowed by its hit dice (204 hit points for a 17-Hit-Die specimen). This hit point gain is permanent. During this stage, anyone who touches the scrolls can "feel" the ulgurstasta's evil mind and can communicate with it telepathically. The ulgurstasta is ready to perform the final portion of the ritual once it reaches maximum hit points

The containment sphere is invisible, and feels like a cold, transparent barrier of rubbery material. The reader of the scrolls who created the sphere can touch it safely, but any other creature who touches it takes 12d6 points of damage from negative energy (DC 20 Fortitude save for half damage).

The reader of the *Apostolic Scrolls* can cause the sphere to vanish at any time as a standard action. The sphere can also be destroyed in one of the following ways.

- The sphere can be destroyed with a *disintegrate*, *Mordenkainen's disjunction*, *rod of cancellation*, *miracle*, *wish*, or a *sphere of annihilation*
- The sphere can be destroyed by successful turn undead check. The cleric must make a DC 20 turn undead check, followed immediately by a DC 20 caster level check. Failure on either roll causes a backlash of negative energy that inflicts 1d4 negative levels on the character. Success on both rolls weakens the sphere enough that a successful *dispel magic* cast at it in the next 1d4 rounds against caster level 20th causes it to vanish.
- If the original reader of the scrolls is slain, the ulgurstasta ceases to gain hit points and instead loses 1d8 hit points per day until it reaches average hit points for a specimen of its size. At this point, the sphere vanishes and the ulgurstasta is released into the environs, likely in an extraordinarily foul mood.
- If the reader of the scrolls releases the ulgurstasta once it has reached maximum hit points, it shimmers with a green light and permanently gains the benefits of *haste*, *shield of faith*, and *bull's strength* (caster level 20th). Finally, an ulgurstasta enhanced in this manner now creates spawn of Kyuss rather than skeletons of any humanoid creature it swallows.
- Each copy of the *Apostolic Scrolls* works only once. When the sphere of containment is taken down and the ulgurstasta within is released, the scrolls become nonmagical. The lore within remains, however, and if consulted it grants a +4 bonus on any Knowledge (religion) checks made about Kyuss and his cult.

Strong necromancy [evil]; CL 20th; Weight 1 lb.

PART FOUR: BLOOD OF A CHAMPION

If the PCs don't defeat Bozal Zahol, Event 7 quickly transforms into a scene of horror. One round after the final battle with Auric begins, Bozal releases the ulgurstasta, which immediately begins hammering on the roof of area **32**. It makes a +11 Strength check once per round against DC 24. Failure indicates a large section of ground shakes and bulges upward ominously. Success indicates that the massive undead worm plows up into the arena. The crowd falls silent for a stunned moment, and in this silence Raknian steps up and shouts, "Lo! The Apostle of Kyuss is among us! THERE! THERE ARE THE CHAMPIONS YOU SEEK!" As the ulgurstasta roars and

Raknian points at the gladiators below, the audience erupts into a riot of panic.

The Apostle of Kyuss' goal in this battle is to swallow Auric (or any other character with at least one level in fighter) and transform him into a spawn of Kyuss. Once it does so, the final conditions of the ritual Raknian and Bozal performed fall into place. Three things happen in rapid succession at this point:

- The ulgurstasta is immediately healed back to maximum hit points.
- The spirits of the myriad dead that have died in the Free City Arena rise up, a wailing, writhing blanket of rage and necromantic ruin. All creatures still within the arena immediately suffer 1d4 negative levels before the spirits fade away. Creatures drained to zero levels by this burst of necromantic power die, only to rise as wights 1d4 rounds later. The repercussions of thousands of wights in the Free City are grim indeed.
- Raknian himself cries out in triumphant pain as Kyuss, pleased with the display of power and faith, grants his wish for immortality and transforms Raknian into a death knight. This undead template is detailed on page 207 of the *Monster Manual II*, but exact stats for the new Raknian are likely unecessary at this point. His first action upon becoming a death knight is to summon a nightmare, mount it, and then flee into the Etheral Plane. In this event, Raknian travels north to the Wormcrawl Fissure to join Kyuss' undead legions there—he may appear later in the campaign to torment the PCs further, but for now, the director of the Free City Arena is out of the picture.

Ideally the PCs can kill the ulgurstasta before this tragic event takes place. If the PCs manage to defeat the ulgurstasta, Raknian is dumbfounded for a few moments but quickly recovers. He flees back to his palace and then tries to flee the city, disgraced and on the run. You might wish to have him surface later in the campaign, perhaps as a fugitive hiding in the city of Alhaster in "The Prince of Redhand."

If the PCs defeat Bozal but leave the ulgurstasta in its sphere of force, Raknian learns of the unfortunate turn of events himself the night before the final battle when he tries to contact Bozal to make sure everything is in place to proceed. In this event, Raknian himself procures a *rod of cancellation* from contacts in the black market and releases the ulgurstasta himself during the final games, leaving the ceremonies themselves to Talabir to perform.

The best solution to this adventure is for the PCs to destroy both Bozal and the ulgurstasta before the final games. If the PCs manage this, Raknian morosely carries through with the rest of the games, but his actions are noticeably subdued and depressed. The evening after the final games, he retreats to his personal chambers, gathers his gear, and slips out of the Free City to start a new life elsewhere.

CONCLUDING THE ADVENTURE

As long as the PCs prevent the tragedy of the mass sacrifice from occurring, they still have a chance to win the final prize money. Raknian is likely not the one to hand out the award, but Talabir Welik is only too happy to honor the PCs with their rightful prize.

If the PCs discovered Lahaka's zombie in area **29**, Ekaym is devastated. Still, he honors his agreement and allows the PCs to take the full award for their success in the Campion's Games. If the zombie is still animated, he destroys it and then returns with the body south to the city of Cauldron to see about having his beloved sister brought back to life (or at the very least, buried in the Hall of Carvings in the village of Redgorge).

Yet despite the PCs' successes (or in addition to their failures) one last tragedy waits to be discovered.

At some point during the Champion's Games, Raknian learns troubling news. It seems that a notable sage named Eligos has been asking around about Kyuss, the *Apostolic Scrolls*, and the Age of Woms. At Bozal's urging, Raknian sends his cohort Okoral on an assassination mission against the sage. Okoral takes along a couple of elite guards to help with the job, and has little trouble invading the sage's home the night before the Final Battle and murders him in his sleep. Should the PCs return to Eligos's house, they find both Eligos and Pollard are quite dead—their killers are nowhere to be found. Okoral himself fades into the shadows once Raknian falls from prominence, and may hold a grudge against the PCs in the future.

A search of the estate turns up one item of interest. With a DC 20 Search check, the party discovers a bundle of notes and observations that catalog what Eligos has learned of the Age of Worms. This bundle is kept in a small coffer on the shelf of Eligos's study and was simply overlooked by Okoral in his rush to do the job and get out. A note on the top of this bundle is addressed to Allustan, and reads, "My dear friend Allustan—What your adventurers have stumbled into sickens me to my soul. Every new leaf I turn reveals an even darker secret. Here are my notes. You must take them to our one-time master—although I fear that even he may be ill-equipped for what writhes in all of our futures. Until then..." The note is not finished.

For now, the PCs should be able to rest easy. They've likely not only prevented a terrible tragedy from striking the heart of the Free City, but may have become Champions themselves. Certainly, the events at this year's Champion's Games are on the tongues of everyone in the city. Give the PCs some time to bask in their newfound fame and glory. They may feel that they've come to a dead end in their investigations into the truth behind the Age of Worms, but this is not the case. If they don't find the package of notes Eligos prepared for Allustan, the PCs soon learn of another reason to return to Diamond Lake.

It seems that a dragon has come to town.

APPENDIX: NEW MONSTER

Froghemoth

Huge Aberration (Aquatic)
Hit Dice: 20d8+120 (210 hp)
Initiative: +5
Speed: 20 ft., swim 50 ft.
Armor Class: 21 (–2 size, +1 Dex, +12 natural), touch 9, flat-footed 20
Base Attack/Grapple: +15/+35
Attack: Tentacle +25 melee (2d6+12)

SCALING THE ADVENTURE

"The Fireplace Level" is designed for a group of four 9th-level characters, but with a little work it can be adapted for use by 7th–8th-level characters or 10th–11th-level characters. Simply adjust all NPC character levels up or down as appropriate by a number equal to that which the average party level of your group deviates from 9. Don't forget to modify the amount of treasure found in the adventure appropriately. Specific changes to the adventure include:

7th–8th-level parties: Remove one of the archers from Arcane Auriga, one of the halberdiers from Badlands Revenge, and one of the mercenaries from Sapphire Squad. Take away Pitch Blade's *potions of fly* and *barkskin*. Replace froghemoth with a 10- or 11-headed pryohydra. Remove one of the flesh golems from Auric's warband. Replace the alkilith demon with a 16-HD bebilith and replace the enhanced ulgurstasta in area **32** with an ordinary ulgerstasta.

10th–11th-level parties: Add an archer to Arcane Auriga, a halberdier to Badlands revenge, and a third barbarian to Pitch Blade. Advance Froghemoth by 6–8 Hit Dice (making it Gargantuan) and have on of Raknian's mages cast *stoneskin* on it before the fight begins. Replace the flesh golems in Auric's Warband with stone golems. Replace the ochre jellies in area **21** with black puddings, and add two additional mohrgs to area **27**. Advance the Alkilith demon by 4 Hit Dice. Make Bozal Zahol a half-fiend instead of a tiefling, and give the ulgurstasta the evolved undead template from *Libris Mortis* page 99.

Full Attack: 4 tentacles +25 melee (2d6+12) and tongue +23 melee (1d8+6) and bite +23 melee (2d6+18/18–20)
Space/Reach: 15 ft./15 ft. (30 ft. with tongue)
Special Attacks: Constrict 2d6+12 (tentacle) or 1d8+6 (tongue), improved grab, powerful bite, swallow whole
Special Qualities: Amphibious, darkvision 60 ft., partial electrical immunity, resist fire 30
Saves: Fort +14, Ref +7, Will +17
Abilities: Str 35, Dex 12, Con 23, Int 1, Wis 16, Cha 13
Skills: Hide +7*, Jump +22*, Listen +5, Spot +17
Feats: Alertness, Improved Initiative, Improved Natural Attack (tentacle), Iron Will, Great Fortitude, Multiattack, Skill Focus (Hide)
Environment: Temperate swamp
Organization: Solitary or pair
Challenge Rating: 13
Treasure: None
Alignment: Always neutral
Advancement: 21–24 HD (Huge), 25–40 HD (Gargantuan), 41–60 HD (Colossal)

This monster is huge and weird. Vaguely frog-like in shape, it has four writhing tentacles in place of front legs. Its head is mostly mouth, and its mouth is mostly teeth. A retractable stalk protrudes from the front of its head, at the end of which stare three bulbous eyes. The massive thing is a dark green save for its belly, which is pale. A powerful tongue tipped with barbs lolls wetly from its mouth.

The dread froghemoth is a dangerous and powerful predator that has few natural enemies. The presence of a froghemoth in a swampland typically manifests in a marked decrease in any other large swamp-dwelling animals or monsters. The creature's croaking roar can be heard for miles.

Froghemoths have not always plagued the swamps of the world. The first froghemoth was encountered in a strange unnatural cavern deep in the Barrier Peaks by a group of adventurers, but news of its ferocity spread quickly and attracted the attentions of all manner of collectors, hunters, and cultists from around the world. The discovery of several banks of huge, preserved, yet still viable froghemoth eggs made a small group of adventuring merchants quite rich until they were murdered and their remaining supply of eggs were stolen by intolerant cultists of an obscure hopping deity of the swamps. This particular sect of cultists made it their mission to introduce these eggs to numerous swamplands throughout the world. And unfortunately for the denizens of these swamps, the froghemoths are thriving. Today, while still rare, stories of froghemoth sightings can be heard throughout the world.

A froghemoth stands 18 feet tall and weighs 5 tons.

Combat

The froghemoth is a terror in battle, charging toward prey with great thunderous bellows. It attacks with its tongue, tentacles, and bite, often splitting these attacks between different targets in a desperate gluttonous attempt to gather up as much food as it can. Stupid to a fault, a froghemoth rarely if ever breaks off combat to escape possible death.

Improved Grab (Ex): To use this ability, the froghemoth must hit with its tentacle or tongue attack. It can then attempt to start a grapple as a free action without provoking an attack of opportunity. If it wins the grapple check, it establishes a hold and immediately inflicts constriction damage. It can attempt to swallow whole a grappled opponent in the following round.

Powerful Bite (Ex): A froghemoth's jaws are extraordinarily powerful. Even though its bite is a secondary attack, it applies 1-1/2 times its Strength modifier to damage done with its bite. Its bite threatens a critical hit on a natural roll of 18–20.

Swallow Whole (Ex): A froghemoth can try to swallow a grabbed opponent of up to two size categories smaller by making a successful grapple check. Once inside, the victim takes 2d6+12 points of bludgeoning damage plus 1d8+4 points of acid damage per round. A swallowed creature can cut its way out using a light slashing or piercing weapon by dealing 25 points of damage to the froghemoth's stomach (AC 13). Once the creature exits, muscular action closes the hole; another swallowed opponent must cut its own way out.

A Huge froghemoth's stomach can hold 4 Medium, 8 Small, 16 Tiny, 32 Diminutive, or 64 Fine or smaller opponents.

Partial Electrical Immunity (Ex): The froghemoth is partially immune to electrical damage. Each time it would normally take damage from an electrical attack, it takes no damage but is instead slowed for 1 round.

Skills: A froghemoth gains a +16 racial bonus on Jump checks. In swampy terrain it gains a +8 racial bonus on hide checks.

Tito Leati's previous credits in Dungeon include "Irandel," "The Seventh Arm," and "The Demonskar Legacy" (part four of the Shackled City Adventure Path).

THE FREE CITY

BY RICHARD PETT
BY MATT DIXON
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The fourth and fifth adventures in the Age of Worms Adventure Path take place in the Free City, a massive metropolis that holds limitless opportunities for adventure, excitement, and intrigue. A proper and full exposé on this city could easily take up an entire issue (or more) of *Dungeon*. Further, the Free City itself is intended to be completely adaptable to your campaign. If you've set the Age of Worms in the Forgotten Realms, the Free City is Waterdeep. In Eberron, it is the city of Sharn. In the World of Greyhawk, it is Greyhawk City itself. In your home campaign, it could be anything else. A full accounting of the Free City would thus ironically limit its usability in the various campaigns, since each of these potential cities has a different look and feel.

This Backdrop instead presents a small portion of one of the Free City's many districts, focusing on a single neighborhood of a few dozen buildings. It is an older part of the Free City, in which the houses and hovels sag and lean, and stone surfaces are weathered smooth like gravestones marking forgotten souls. Above the streets, towering chimneystacks rise high above rat-infested shingles, and ravens call into the perpetual twilight of the cavernous alleys beneath.

The locals call this corner of the city Midnight's Muddle.

MIDNIGHT'S MUDDLE

The streets of Midnight's Muddle are narrow and unlit, and chimneys often cloy the alleys with the tangy stink of woodsmoke. Three streets pass through the neighborhood—Nevern Walk, Bobclay's Alley, and Muddle Street. These streets are traveled by locals, for the most part, and the looming walls of the surrounding buildings keep them in perpetual shadow save for an hour or two during midday.

Building walls are very rough and can be scaled with a DC 10 Climb check. Roofs vary between 20 and 40 feet in height (although a few buildings described are taller), and are wood shingled unless indicated otherwise. The narrow streets are slightly raised in the center so rain washes filth to gutters on either side. Drains in the gutters down to the sewer below often back up during the rainy season.

The southeastern face of Midnight's Muddle faces the Free City's Low Market, a large square that hosts crowded daily markets that draw customers and

entertainers from throughout the city's less affluent districts. If there's anything the PCs seek that can't be found for sale in Midnight's Muddle, chances are that they can probably find it for sale somewhere in the Low Market.

1. Tarquin's Manor

Tarquin Shortstone XXIV (NG male gnome expert 3) is a small gnome who seems to have every color of the rainbow in his flamboyant attire. The owner of the Crooked House (area **2**) next door, Tarquin dwells in this impressive townhouse, where he leads a flamboyant life and is often seen in the early morning singing hymns from his rooftop balcony. Tarquin keeps seven extraordinarily well-behaved but still dangerous hounds as protectors and friends. He often pays customers to walk them.

Tarquin's house reflects his character—color, color, and more color. Classical statues cram his chambers (all of them extravagantly painted) and huge canvases of exotic landscapes dominate the manor's rooms. He keeps a staff of four at his house; all of which are visibly scared of his hounds. Tarquin's distant relative Fosdike recently moved into the neighborhood (area **10**), and the two often spend long hours here playing with the hounds, repainting statues, or drinking into the wee hours of the night.

2. The Crooked House

One of the larger buildings in the neighborhood, the Crooked House is just that, a bit off tilt. Its walls are all at odd angles and the windows and doors aren't quite squared. Despite this, the tavern and inn is in good repair. The Crooked House is detailed in full in "The Hall of Harsh Reflections," in issue #127.

3. Mobber's Tasty Vegetables

A fine, three-story townhouse rises here. **Mobber Blaskenabby** (LN male dwarf expert 2), the owner, uses the ground floor of this fine building to sell vegetables he grows with the help of a friendly druid named **Ilakarus Hobentak** (LN male human druid 2) in a secret garden a day's travel south of the Free City. Mobber's wares vary by the week. On some days he sells leaves from a single colossal cabbage, while on others he prepares delicious (and tangy) greenvise salads. Mobber himself talks very slowly, a side-effect from spending too much time conversing with plants that have all the time in the world to listen.

4. Crowmar's Magnificent Lantern Emporium

Crowmar Footly (NG male human expert 2) is a very tall and stocky man with a penchant for Tarquin Shortstone's barley wine. Crowmar's made a lot of money selling lanterns, sunrods, and other illuminating objects over the years—many of the lanterns found in Midnight's Muddle are his design. Yet recently he's fallen on hard times. A few months ago he had a large purse of money and a bursting enthusiasm for a great idea he believed would revolutionize lanterns. He came up with this plan whilst working as a miner a foul Diamond Lake mine. His plan was simple: a safe, portable means of illumination for miners—specially engineered fire beetle cages. Crowmar's initial design was a cage with special leg holes so that the fire beetle locked inside could still move around, to the limits of a tiny chain attached to a bootstrap. Sadly, Crowmar overestimated the cooperation of the humble (and stupid) fire beetle, and when a large number of imported fire beetles escaped, he very nearly had to sell his shop to cover the damages. Fire beetles can still be found in Midnight's Muddle, and it's rare that a week doesn't go by with stories of a child or pet being bitten by an angry beetle. These stories hurt poor Crowmar almost as much as they hurt his savings.

5. Murdo's Pantry

Murdo Aberankus (NG male dwarf expert 2) cooks an incredible array of food daily, favoring foods he has specially imported from foreign lands. His food is expensive (double the normal prices found in the *Player's Handbook*) but the cuisine (a mixture of spiced dumplings, pies and cakes) is exceptional. His eatery boasts a fine upper-floor terrace where customers can get away from the bustle of the streets and enjoy a spectacular view of the Free City. Murdo himself is astonishingly fat and usually covered in flour.

Tarquin

6. Ret's Taxidermy

A stuffed otyugh stands watch outside this cluttered shop front. The young halfling named **Ret Mallenkask** (LG male halfling expert 5; Craft [taxidermy] +14) who owns this shop often wears a bloodstained apron, even when out at night. He's an expert at stuffing trophy heads and animals and monsters of all sizes, and claims that he once stuffed an entire dragon turtle for an eccentric (but very rich) adventurer. Although the stuffed otyugh out front of his shop has seen better days, he really is a talented taxidermist. He typically charges 50 gp per Hit Die to stuff an animal or monster.

7. A Tinge of Vellum

Madame **Alexia Tinge** (LG female human expert 3) is a bookish, reed-thin woman who dresses in woolen clothes. She sells quality vellums (along with paper, parchment, quills, and inks) from this shop, and is never afraid to give her customers a somewhat shrill report on the rising prices of producing fine writing materials in this modern day. A life-long spinster, she shares the upper floor with her

three older (and equally shrill) sisters Agatha, Tyara, and Zelaria.

8. Moxitled's Alchemical Wares

Moxitled Jhrenn (CN male half-elf expert 3/wizard 2) is an eccentric man with wild, bushy hair. He spends much of his time in his cellar laboratory, manufacturing alchemical wares for his twin sons Doran and Nordan to sell in the cramped shopfront on the ground floor above. After his wife perished in a mysterious fire several years ago in a distant city, Moxitled and his sons left town and settled here. He is rarely seen by his neighbors, but his sons are common sights at the Two-Necked Swan (area **26**).

9. Two-Boy Theatre

The tiny theatre is run by a pair of young men who escaped the clutches of a wererat orphanage owner on the other side of the city. The older of the two is **Danifar** (CG male human expert 2/bard 1), a handsome lad with short, dark hair and a ready smile. **Hestek** (NG male human expert 3) is the younger of the two, and his skill at creating puppets is in large part the reason for the success of their venture.

The boys put on plays in this tiny ten-seat theatre (itself little more than a shed), using silhouette puppets and their own acting skills in religious miracle stories. The boys generally give good account of themselves, yet charge only 1 sp per performance. Both boys believe that Ludwick, the wererat orphanage owner they escaped a year ago, perished in the fire that consumed his lair. Whether or not this is in fact the case is unclear.

10. Shortstone Wines

A former temple to St. Cuthbert that fell on hard times after its priest was exposed in a scandal involving slavery and smuggling, this building's new owner is a gnome entrepreneur named **Fosdike Shortstone X** (LN male gnome expert 2/rogue 1). Unusually tall and broad for a gnome, Fosdike wears a monocle and dresses in dark velvet suits. He is in the process of converting this one-time temple into a warehouse to import and export wine. Fosdike is the third cousin twice removed of Tarquin (area **1**), and the two are the best of friends.

11. Wake's Construction

Kared Wake (LG male human commoner 3/expert 1) is a strong but lean man in his thirties. His current trade keeps his warehouse full of timbers, stone, and iron. A pair of 3rd-level human warriors guards the building—Kared himself lives elsewhere in the city with his family and only visits this location to requisition building materials as he needs them.

12. Ruined Shrine

Once a small shrine dedicated to Heironeous, this building burnt down a few weeks ago. The only priest, a respected man named Varda, was killed in the fire. His body has been interred in the crypt below the Free City's glorious Sanctum of Heironeous. The loss of Varda and his shrine has left many in Midnight's Muddle depressed and suspicious—rumors abound that the fire was deliberate. Those who arrived to help fight it insist that the windows and doors were ensorcelled and made impervious to harm, preventing anyone from breaking into the building to save Varda. Others hold that this is a flimsy excuse Varda's supposed "friends" are spreading to explain why no one was brave enough to enter the burning building. In any event, the church of Heironeous is strangely quiet on the matter, and many who once worshiped the Invincible One have become disenchanted with their faith as a result.

13. Burnt Hovel

This building was consumed in the fire that started at area **12**. The family that once lived here has left the city—the

building is now used by vagrants and vagabonds as an impromptu shelter.

14. Burnt Shop

As with area 13, this shop went up in the fire that destroyed area 12. Its owner was a struggling apothecary named Laslo. The day after the fire he threw himself into the Millstream north of the Muddle and drowned. The local homeless avoid this ruin out of suspicious fear that Laslo's ghost may now haunt the place.

15. Mistress Crump's Hovel

Mistress Oriana Crump (LN female human aristocrat 2/commoner 3) is a chinless, toothless hag with such a penchant for profanity that she is incapable of uttering a sentence without betraying a paucity in her vocabulary by swearing. She's lived in the Muddle for decades, ever since her once proud family fell on hard times and was forced to sell its estate. The local children enjoy tormenting her while the local adults enjoy avoiding her.

16. Tattoo Parlor

Although many locals call him the Painted Man due to his fearsome appearance (he's covered in tattoos of writhing worm-like dragons), **Jharan Hubris** (NG male human expert 2/bard 4; Craft [tattoo] +14) is a kindly soul. The tattooist stands over 6 feet tall and weighs 250 pounds, and generally walks around half-naked to show off his wares. Hubris's favorite subject is dragons, but he is generally skilled at crafting any tattoo. His works are not cheap, with a small tattoo the size of a coin costing 1 gp. An apple-sized tattoo can cost up to 10 gp, while large tattoos (such as the sinuous dragon that coils along his shoulders and down his right arm) can cost 100 gp or more. His greatest works are magic tattoos that store spells. These tattoos function as potions—once used, they vanish. Jharan can make magic tattoos of the following spells: *alter self, cat's grace, cure light wounds, detect magic, disguise self,* or *expeditious retreat.* Their cost equals the cost of a potion of the same spell. Creating a magic tattoo takes one day, and only the one who bears the tattoo can be affected by its magic. Activating a magic tattoo is a standard action that provokes an attack of opportunity.

17. Lobbly the Butcher

Lobbly Drent (N male human expert 2) is a miserable and lonely soul who seems to take singular delight in chopping up meat. He never married, his parents are dead, and his only friends are his astounding collection of knives. Still, his wares are always fresh and his prices fair.

18. Marik's Buns

Marik Larathka (LG female human expert 1) is a portly lady who keeps her gray hair tied in a bun. She makes very fine cakes and buns, frequently using strong aromatic spices such as nutmeg and cinnamon to give her wares a unique taste. She and her six children run this bakery with love and devotion, and start working before dawn every day. The smells from this bakery are a welcome addition to the day, and many of the locals have made a ritual of starting their day sitting on benches and chairs out front.

19. Horatio Rib's Everything

Aging **Horatio Rib** (LN male gnome aristocrat 1/expert 3; Bluff +10) wears a thick velvet robe and claims to have one of everything for sale in his tiny but crowded shop. His shelves and cupboards certainly have all of the standard equipment listed in the *Player's Handbook* as well as most mundane items. He actually has few magic items (anything worth more than 300 gp is probably not for sale here) on hand, but claims to have many more in "storage out back." His prices are a little high (10% over standard), a surcharge Horatio says covers the fact that his shop's so well stocked. Sadly, Horatio's belief that he has everything for sale here is a manifestation of his mild dementia. If the PCs ask for something he doesn't actually have, he attempts to Bluff the heroes that he actually has what they want if they'll only wait a few minutes for him to step in back to retrieve the item from storage. He then slips out of the building, races to another shop or into the Low Market, and buys a stand-in for the requested item, taking a minute to spruce up the item before returning with it in hand. If, for example, a PC asks for a +2 *anarchic halberd,* Horatio dashes out to Zud's Towering Armory (area 27) buys a halberd, ties some colorful ribbons around its haft and scratches an exotic name like "Thu N'arkik Wun" on its metal head before returning triumphantly (and possibly half an hour after being asked) to the PCs. He charges full price (+10%), of course. If the PCs confront him with the truth (say, after casting *detect magic* on the halberd) he sputters and rages and refuses to sell them anything more.

20. Shrine of the Weeping Woman

Tucked under a bent yew tree of great age is a small, unassuming shrine. The little building houses a statue of a female angel that purportedly cried actual tears some six years ago. A number of priests examined the statue after the event but found it to be nonmagical. Identification of the angel itself or of the statue's mysterious sculptor escaped the priests as well, and they eventually cataloged it as a hoax.

The shrine is currently owned by **Forwell Hog** (NE male human druid 7/vermin lord 1), a tall, thin man who walks with the aid of a stick. He claims to worship an obscure aspect of Heironeous called the Weeping Woman, one of Heironeous's lesser servitors and a patron of martyrs. He has several devoted followers in the neighborhood—all elderly souls who have lost children in recent wars. Forwell dwells in a small cluttered chamber behind a timber door at the back of the shrine.

In truth, Forwell uses the shrine as a front, and is the head of a small but dangerous religious sect called the Cult of the Festering One. Forwell was once a reclusive druid who lived in the southern Cairn Hills. One fateful evening, he discovered a strange cairn in which laired a particularly intelligent and charismatic phase spider warlock called the Festering One. The spider captured Forwell, and over the course of the next several months of torture and telepathic inquisitions, Forwell's mind finally snapped, and he began worshiping the spider. He emerged from the Festering One's cairn a vermin lord—this prestige class is detailed in the *Book of Vile Darkness,* but enough details are provided here so you can run encounters with this villain without requiring access to that book.

Forwell charges 1 gp for visitors to see the statue, but allows his small (but growing) congregation to visit and pray free of charge. Once in a while, one of his flock vanishes,

Forwell Hog

but since his worshipers are the forgotten elderly, no one really notices. The other members of his cult believe that their missing friends have been called up to heaven by the Weeping Woman to rejoin their martyred children, and themselves look forward to the day Forwell invites them into his inner sanctum for the same reward. He's careful to not accept any worshipers from the neighborhood, accepting aspirants only from other parts of the city. So far, no one's noticed there's anything unusual going on here, a testament to Forwell's subtlety as much as to society's willingness to ignore the possibility of something terrible happening next door. Forwell is responsible for the fire that killed Varda and burnt areas 12–14, but he covered his tracks well. He lit the fire after Varda learned a little too much about his true nature.

Forwell is currently working at expanding the basement below his shrine into a space large enough to house the Festering One itself. Once this space is ready in a few months, he hopes to smuggle the phase spider into the city so he can be closer to his patron. Forwell himself is a lanky man with stringy hair and sunken eyes. He always wears a ratty gray cloak and darker colored robe that hide the fact that the skin on his torso and back has grown rigid and chitinous.

A PC who interacts with Forwell can make a DC 20 Knowledge (religion) check. Success indicates that he may seem sincere in his worship, the angel statue itself has no real connection to Heironeous, and there is no known entity called the Weeping Woman who serves him. With a DC 30 check, the character notices several tiny incongruities in the shrine or in Forwell's manner that make it obvious he does not actually worship Heironeous. Forwell is quite versed in matters religious and has a fairly good Bluff check—this, combined with his low profile, have kept his secrets safe so far.

Forwell Hog **CR 8**

Male human druid 7/vermin lord 1
NE Medium humanoid
Book of Vile Darkness 73
Init +2; **Senses** Listen +8, Spot +8
Languages Common

AC 15, touch 12, flat-footed 13
hp 46 (8 HD)
Fort +6, **Ref** +4, **Will** +9

Spd 30 ft.
Melee mwk dagger +5 (1d4–1/19–20)
Ranged mwk dagger +8 (1d4–1/19–20)
Base Atk +5; **Grp** +4
Special Atk wild shape 3/day
Combat Gear *wand of contagion* (18 charges)
Spells Prepared (CL 8th, ranged touch +7):
4th—*cure serious wounds, giant vermin*
3rd—*cure moderate wounds* (2), *remove disease*
2nd—*barkskin, chill metal* (DC 14), *flaming sphere* (DC 14), *reduce animal* (DC 14)
1st—*cure light wounds* (2), *magic fang, obscuring mist, produce flame*
0—*detect magic* (3), *light, read magic, virtue*

Abilities Str 8, Dex 14, Con 12, Int 10, Wis 15, Cha 15
SQ animal companion (none currently), chitin +1, nature sense, resist nature's lure, trackless step, vermin servant, wild empathy +9, woodland stride
Feats Combat Reflexes, Persuasive, Skill Focus (Bluff), Verminfriend*
Skills Bluff +17, Diplomacy +4, Hide +5, Intimidate +6, Knowledge (nature) +8, Knowledge (religion) +5, Listen +8, Move Silently +5, Survival +4, Spot +8
Possessions combat gear, *bracers of armor +2*, masterwork dagger, threadbare robes and cloak

*This feat is from the *Book of Vile Darkness*; any time a vermin is about to attack Forwell, he can make a DC 20 Charisma check. If this check succeeds, that vermin refuses to attack him for 24 hours.

Chitin (Ex): A vermin lord gains a +1 natural armor bonus to Armor Class from the chitinous plates that begin to grow on his flesh.

Vermin Servant: A vermin lord gains a servant in the form of a vermin of up to 1 HD. This servant is treated as a familiar; its intelligence increases, and it is considered a magical beast. Forwell's vermin servant is a Small monstrous spider.

21. Meply's Alchemical Curatives

The short, balding **Meply Molabian** (N male human sorcerer 6) is an alchemist with a clever rouse. When he arrived in the Free City a year ago, he struggled to make money as the competition constantly undercut him and slandered his trade. To combat this, he came up with a trick—he became his own competition. Meply lives two existences, running shops right next door to each other. The abuse Meply and "Din" heap on each other is so legendary in this area that it is assumed they are mortal enemies. The constant war ensures that both their names are never out of local gossip—which provides both shops plenty of free advertising. Meply's shop focuses on alchemical supplies and potions, and it is open for 8 hours during the day from 8:00 in the morning to 4:00 in the afternoon. His *ring of sustenance* allows him to run both this shop and the one next door with ease.

A DC 20 Search check of Meply's personal chambers in the back of the shop reveals a secret door that allows access to the shop next door.

22. Din Danly's Alchemical Curatives

The bearded Din Danly has an outstanding head of red hair—his pride and joy. Of course, this is all a disguise—Din is actually Meply Molabian, disguised with a *hat of disguise*. Din's shop is open from 6:00 in the evening until 2:00 in the morning. His shop focuses on poisons and magical powders, elixirs, and other one-shot wondrous items.

23. Yalexex's Abode

The eccentric artist **Yalexex** (CN male human expert 10) who lives here was attracted by the cheap rent and lives in poverty in his rooftop garret. The floor below is a rickety open space in which he stores painting supplies. The paintings themselves (all wonderful and masterfully done portraits of famous citizens of the Free City) are kept in a stack under a ratty blanket in the corner. The handsome brown-haired, fair-skinned artist is often covered in colorful paint, and he talks quickly and often changes subjects in mid-sentence.

Yalexex paints people who catch his eye—most of his portraits are of average people he met on the street who possessed some hidden aspect that intrigued him. If any of the PCs has a Charisma score of 16 or higher, Yalexex might notice them in the neighborhood and ask them to come to his home to sit for a painting. The process takes 1d4 days, and the resulting portrait just happens to be a masterpiece worth 500 gp. Yalexex, of course, is dissatisfied with it and tries to destroy it. A DC 25 Diplomacy check is enough to convince him to sell it to the PC for as little as 1 gp, provided the PC gives him time to paint over his signature (Yalexex doesn't want his name attached to anything of such obvious low quality).

Yalexex's other works are quite well made—a DC 20 Appraise check reveals that each of the two dozen portraits he has on display could fetch as much as 100 gp from collectors. Yalexex has no real interest in selling his works, though, and treats his finished pieces with passive disinterest, unaware of how good they really are. If a PC convinces him to show them to a collector (a task requiring a DC 30 Diplomacy check), Yalexex becomes an overnight success and soon moves out of Midnight's Muddle into a much nicer flat in the northern end of the Free City. How the artist treats his PC patron after he's discovered is left to you.

One strange manifestation of Yalexex's eccentricity is the fact that he always incorporates a tiny green worm into his portraits. The worm is usually quite hard to find (DC 30 Search check), but it is unmistakable once located. Yalexex is unaware of this quirk, and has no explanation as to why the worms appear in his paintings—if confronted, he may even accuse the PCs of painting them in just to mess with his head. The truth behind these hidden worms is left for you to develop.

24. Weft Tower

This three-story tower is the home of **Ulous Weft** (CN male human commoner 3/rogue 3), a failed rogue and trickster with long gray hair. He moved to the neighborhood several years ago amid rumors of his fabulous wealth and stories of relatives who were successful adventurers. A broken and bitter man, Ulous never receives visitors. The penniless man lives alone, save for a large number of rats he's been unable to exterminate.

25. The Boat

A large sign hanging in front of this shop brazenly proclaims "The Boat—She sails the ocean of commerce!" The sign depicts a colorful boat with a larger-than-life image of the owner's red rosy cheeks and grin emblazoned on a foresail. This is **Cobly Weent** (LG male human expert 3), a large man who dresses in red silks that match his rosy red cheeks. Cobly lives here with his wife, his three children, his mother, and his infirm grandmother, all of whom are packed tightly into the upper floor apartments. The lower floor is a shop front that sells all manner of furnishings, carpets, statues, and other goods for dressing up a home. The interior of this shop is cunningly built to resemble the below-decks chambers of a massive merchant ship.

26. The Two-Necked Swan

The roughest ale-house in Midnight's Muddle is run by **Tudge** (CN male half-orc warrior 5) and **Ruck** (CN male half-orc warrior 3/expert 1), bald half-orc brothers who won the bar in a bet. The place has a well-deserved reputation for being a den of gamblers, lowlifes, and cheap prostitutes. A small circular amphitheater in the basement is always open for business. This fighting pit hosts battles between warriors, between warriors and beasts, and between beasts. Tudge and Ruck are frequent visitors to the Free City Arena, and if the heroes can change their attitude from indifferent to friendly, they provide details on the place, in particular the layout of the public area and the history of any notable battles there.

27. Zud's Towering Armory

Zud Yabberchap (LN male halfling expert 4) is a wild-eyed, red-haired man who fosters a pathological hatred of Souf (area **28**). Zud makes a brisk living selling armor and weapons, most of which he's crafted himself. Anyone who insults or badmouths Souf earns Zud's immediate friendship and a 10% discount on anything they buy here. Zud's hatred of the lizardfolk stems from a childhood tragedy when his village was accidentally flooded by a dam constructed by a group of lizardfolk.

28. Souf's Paraphernalia

Souf (NG male lizardfolk expert 2) is something of an oddity and a local legend. A cultured and soft-spoken lizardfolk, Souf abandoned his tribe to move to the Free City in an attempt to educate its citizens about his people. Over the past several years, he's managed not only to establish himself as a respectable citizen, but a shopkeeper as well. His place is a tower of clutter. The rooms, doorways, stairs, and floor are crammed with items—piles of books about ant hills lie on top of others about horse barding, a ballistae hangs from a wall under a banner of frog-men fighting a group of badgers, and a stack of six crates of sunrods leans perilously next to the counter. Souf dresses like a human merchant and is more than willing to give his customers the luxury of looking around without dealing with a pushy salesman. Souf has had several accidents lately, and his arm is currently broken and in a sling after a timber fell on him from one of the rickety buildings nearby. He suspects Zud is behind these "accidents" but can't prove it, so he's taken to avoiding the hateful halfling as much as he can.

29–35. The Muddle

This cluster of buildings comprises the bulk of the residences in the Muddle. Each building is a tenement that houses anywhere from 10 to 30 people in small, cramped apartments. The tenants here are nevertheless friendly and open. The buildings themselves all belong to a man named **Kerril Besk** (LN male human aristocrat 2/expert 1), a fair and just landlord who makes

a tidy fortune on rent gathered from these buildings (and several others like them scattered throughout the Free City). Kerril himself lives elsewhere in the Free City and only visits the Muddle when he's forced to do so to collect on late rent. There are currently no vacancies in these buildings.

36. Ph'xeris the Miracle

Ph'xeris (CN male human aristocrat 2/wizard 7) is an artist who glimpsed the Far Realm and has never been the same since. Independently wealthy, he usually walks around his house naked, exposing his pitifully thin body. His huge house is a series of extended breezy open balconies crammed with insane paintings, statues of iron, and clay sculptures of twisted things, (including many aberrations) so real looking he must have used living examples as reference. Ph'xeris is obsessed with having the building with the most number of doors in the Muddle and has personally installed hundreds of them (many of which open outside on upper floors) in his manor over the years. Although eccentric, he's fairly harmless and would be willing to craft magic items on commission for the PCs. Bear in mind that anything he crafts incorporates subtle influences from the Far Realm or his obsession with doors. For example, a magic suit of armor made by him is embossed with layers of colored enamel depicting pupilless eyes around filigree work of writhing tentacles and open doorways.

Ermelda Web

37. Web's Rooftop Dragonchess Parlor

Aging minor noble **Ermelda Web** (LG female human aristocrat 7), a double-chinned snob who wears expensive jewelry and clothes, runs a smart dragonchess parlor from the upper floor and roof of her manor. Her velvet-lined gaming tables and floors attract the finest clientele in the Muddle and beyond. Ermelda provides a selection of fine wines and delicate seafood for her guests, who can only enter by invitation (requiring a DC 25 Diplomacy check or a bribe of no less than 500 gp). In the Muddle, only Zud and Tarquin Shortstone are members of her elite circle.

38. Shrine to Obad-Hai

Anlathi Merilain (NG female elf cleric 5) is a well-liked priest of Obad-Hai, and the keeper of this small shrine of the god of nature. Her shrine is the only functional place of worship in Midnight's Muddle, and is located near a small section of undeveloped land she's managed to claim from the city government in Obad-Hai's name. Much of her time is spent ensuring that new construction and development in the Free City is undertaken responsibly, but with the loss of the local shrine of Heironeous, many of the Muddle's inhabitants have turned to her for religious guidance. She's a little overwhelmed at the sudden shift in attention, but does what she can to tend to the sick and needy of the Muddle nevertheless.

With thanks to building engineer Mike Whiteoak for his advice, the Muddle is also dedicated to my old mate Mark Crowfoot, one of the most shamefully ludicrous role-players its ever been my pleasure to DM. Along with the self propelled fire beetle cage ("oh come on, how can that not work Rich?"), one of Mark's many proposals was to try to persuade me that his wizard could lie flat on his back and horizontally levitate along the ground and past some guards.

Mt.Zogon
OOO! A TINY PLASMODIAL SLIME CUBE! HI, LITTLE FELLA. YOU'RE SO CUTE.
COME TO MOMMY.
AWW, YOU'RE FLAKY, YOU POOR THING. YOU NEED SOMETHIN' GOOD TO EAT, DONTCHA, LITTLE FELLA? SOMETHING YUMMY-UMMY.
HERE YA GO... FRESH, TASTY ORC EYEBALLS!!
OO! WE LIKES THEM! MMM!
I'M GOING TO CALL YOU... CUBEY!!
YOU ARE SUCH A GIRL.
BY TONY MOSELEY
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VAMPIRES OF WATERDEEP: PART THREE

THE FIREPLACE LEVEL

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FORGOTTEN REALMS, HIGH-LEVEL (13TH–20TH), PLANAR DUNGEON CRAWL,

After fighting through layers of deception, the PCs finally reach the last stronghold of the Master Vampire of Waterdeep. But the final phase of the High Hunt proves to be the most dangerous of them all. Not only does the party face the most powerful minions of an ancient foe who has never been defeated, their hunt threatens to unleash the buried ghosts of a forgotten feud between two of Waterdeep's powerful merchant houses.

"The Fireplace Level" is part three of the three-part Vampires of Waterdeep Campaign Arc. Set in the city of Waterdeep in the FORGOTTEN REALMS campaign setting, it is appropriate for a party of four 14th-level adventurers, scaleable for levels 12–16.

Waterdeep is fully detailed in *City of Splendors: Waterdeep*, but that supplement is not required to run this adventure. Parenthetical references such as "Gost Villa (N57)" refer to the map key found in that supplement for Dungeon Masters wishing to employ the adventure in conjunction with that setting.

Adventure Background

In the Year of Prideful Tales (1219 DR), Lord Geldirth sought to expand the family fortunes of House Gost by getting into the trading business directly, beyond his family's traditional caravan mustering enterprise. He planned a series of magical portals to ship trade goods without the costs associated with overland travel. At great personal expense, the Gost patriarch began construction of a secret subterranean complex (later dubbed the Fireplace Level) beneath the Gost family villa using slaves purchased in Skullport and brought to Waterdeep via the sewers. Once the complex was completed, the slaves were killed or sold to masters in far-off lands. House Gost brought its goods through a secret stair beneath a now-vanished warehouse (which stood where the Grinning Lion [N56] now stands) and then carried them out of the city via a series of portals that led to a hidden cave on the southernmost slopes of the Dark Hills.

In the decades that followed, House Gost's fortunes grew, but difficulties in securing the portal route made shipping goods less reliable than originally expected. In the Year of Many Monsters (1233 DR), Lord Harthar, Geldirth's second son and heir, forged an arrangement with House Gundwynd by which Gundwynd couriers would ferry Gost goods by hippogriff if the portal network could not be used to fulfill a contract in time. At the same time, Lord Harthar added additional

branches to the portal network, which hunters in the employ of House Gost then began to use to capture rare monsters and bring them back to the city for sale.

After six years of self-interested squabbling among the Guildmasters, the Guild Wars flared anew in the Year of the Black Wind (1262 DR). Thanks to a recent alliance with the Shadow Thieves, then patriarch Lord Geldirth II was no longer so dependent on his family's trading business (and hence better able to tolerate disruption to his family's portal network). He took advantage of the chaos of the Guild Wars to end his family's arrangement with House Gundwynd and reclaim his "lost" earnings. Thieves in the employ of House Gost broke into the Gundwynd villa, kidnapped every blood relation of the Gundwynd clan they could find and plundered the family vaults. Those Gundwynds who survived the raid were imprisoned in one of the beast cages in the Gost complex and left to starve to death.

Lord Geldirth II's betrayal of his business partners backfired when several of the Gundwynds arose as ghosts intent on gaining their revenge. Despite several attempts to have the Gundwynd ghosts destroyed, they kept returning, rising up from the depths to stalk the halls of House Gost, unable to rest until they had destroyed the fortunes of Lord Harthar and his heirs and forced the scions of Geldirth II to pay with their lives. Lord Geldirth II was forced to "cash in" his family's investment in the Shadow Thieves in exchange for the guild's assistance in containing the problem. Marune, then Shadowmage of the thieves' guild, constructed a ghost-proof "box of force" around the complex using permanent *wall of force* spells, with automatically resetting *antipathy* traps over the exits.

In the decades that followed, the heirs of House Gost used their family fortune (augmented by wealth seized from House Gundwynd) to build a new trading business based on conventional overland routes. Although members of House Gost continued to use the complex to access the portal network, they did so less and less over the years, as doing so required them to take strong defensive measures against the hostile ghosts that dwelled within the Fireplace Level.

During the same period, a distant heir of House Gundwynd claimed his family's title and rebuilt that house on the back of the family's slave trade. Despite the passage of decades, a lingering distrust remains between the two houses, stemming from long-held suspicions of the Gost clan's hand in nearly destroying the Gundwynd family and its fortune.

In the Year of the Catacombs (1308 DR), a purple worm emerged from the portal inside the Fireplace Level. The monster was instantly frozen in place by a *temporal stasis* trap, but not before its massive bulk shattered much of the surrounding stonework. By chance, this calamity opened a narrow fissure connecting the Fireplace Level to the flue of the fireplace above the Dungeon of the Crypt. Unwilling to pay for the purple worm to be removed, House Gost finally abandoned the subterranean complex, sealed off all access to it from their villa, and expunged it from their records.

The Dungeon of the Crypt had long been home to a vampire lord named Artor Morlin. This Baron of Blood saw an opportunity to create a secondary lair in the wake of the purple worm's arrival. Artor spent much of the next decade exploring the complex, altering it to fit his needs, and hiding a coffin in the coterminous region of the Ethereal Plane.

In the Year of the Gate (1341 DR), the Company of Crazed Venturers chanced upon Artor's primary lair while exploring the Dungeon of the Crypt and ended up driving him up the fireplace flue of his palatial bedchamber. Although the Company assumed the vampire had fled the city, he in fact fled to his secondary lair. The Company discovered the fissure leading to the Gost-built complex and dubbed it the "Fireplace Level." Although the Crazed Venturers explored the dungeon, they never realized Artor lurked within, just beyond their ken.

In the years since his encounter with the Company of Crazed Venturers, Artor has patiently assessed the danger to his returning to the Dungeon of the Crypt. Fhang is the last of a series of vampire minions he has established as lords of the Crypt, a final test to see if the presence of a vampire in the dungeon has been well and truly forgotten by those who dwell in the city above. In the interim, the Fireplace Level remained Artor's primary lair. Now, however, he dwells in plain sight in the guise of "Delinth Oberlin," seneschal of the Gost family, having created a secondary lair in the basement of the Gost Villa.

The story so far

Although this adventure can be run by itself, it is also the final chapter in the Vampires of Waterdeep Campaign Arc. In part one, the PCs were set on the trail of Dhusarra yr Fadila el Abhuk, a vampire from Undermountain who has recently emerged to challenge the Baron of Blood for ownership of the city of Waterdeep. After witnessing her initiate a High Hunt of Malar, the PCs pursued her on a chase through the sewers to the rowhouse of her intended prey.

Soon after this confrontation, the PCs set out to destroy the Master Vampire of Waterdeep themselves, either as a result of being drawn into the High Hunt against their wishes, or at the constant prompting of Dhusarra. Their investigation led them to the Dungeon of the Crypt. Once Artor Morlin's primary lair, the complex has since been transformed into a waymoot and transit point for a variety of Waterdavian criminal elements, monitored by Artor's servant, a vampire doppelganger named Fhang.

Adventure synopsis

Events in and beneath the City of Splendors lead the PCs to explore the Fireplace Level. Inside, they find the ghosts of several members of House Gundwynd imprisoned by a long-dead member of House Gost. The PCs must also deal with the various creatures the Baron of Blood has placed here to destroy intruders.

If you are using the entire Vampires of Waterdeep trilogy, then the PCs explore the Fireplace Level in search of Dhusarra's foe, Artor Morlin. After exploring the extent of the dungeon on the Material Plane, they discover that the sanctuary of their foe lies on the coterminous region of the Ethereal Plane. Once the PCs reach the Ethereal Plane, they must defeat Artor's most powerful minions before fighting

the Baron of Blood himself. Assuming Artor escapes, he flees to his other coffin in the basement of the Gost Villa.

The PCs pursue the fleeing vampire, entering the Gost Villa basement in their hunt for the vampire lord. Meanwhile, Artor (and Fhang, if it survives) pit the defenders of House Gost against the PCs in hopes of framing them for an "unwarranted attack" on one of Waterdeep's merchant houses. Dhusarra (if she survives) joins in the fray as well, ending Waterdeep's vampire war with an epic battle in the home of one of the city's leading families.

Alternately, the adventure might play out in the reverse order. The PCs might conduct an investigation of the Gost Villa and unmask the Baron of Blood there. Assuming Artor escapes, the PCs would then be forced to explore the Fireplace Level and track the Baron of Blood to the Ethereal Plane.

Adventure Hooks

If you are running this adventure as part of the Vampires of Waterdeep Campaign Arc, the characters may discover the Fireplace Level by chasing Fhang up the chimney from the Dungeon of the Crypt, just as the Company of Crazed Venturers did before them. In that case, a hook for this adventure is unnecessary. If the PCs kill Fhang and the doppelganger reverts to its natural form, it is immediately obvious that their real target remains at large within the city. In this case you can use NPCs from the previous two adventures such as Corinna Lathankin or Lord Nandar to point the PCs in the right direction, perhaps with a helpful *divination* spell.

On the other hand, if Fhang dies from a *disintegrate* spell or a turning attempt the PCs may (once again) think they have solved the vampire problem. In this case, you can use the following adventure hook to get the PCs to continue their investigation.

Kyriani Agrivar (N female half-drow wizard 11/Moonstar agent 3), a secret Lord of Waterdeep and proprietress of the tavern called Selûne's Smile (D6), approaches the PCs with an unusual mission. **Asraf yn Malik el Kahaman yi Manshaka** (LE male vampire Chondathan human fighter 10) vanished more than a tenday ago, just hours before he was to meet with Kyriani at Selûne's Smile. Both Kyriani and Asraf are active agents of the Tel Teukiira (Moonstars), the breakaway Harper organization founded by **Khelben "the Blackstaff" Arunsun** (LN male human [Chosen of Mystra] wizard 24/archmage 3). When Kyriani informed Khelben of Asraf's sudden disappearance, the Blackstaff instructed her to approach the PCs and ask them to investigate "beyond the Fireplace." Khelben has long suspected that the vampire he once flushed out of the Dungeon of the Crypt still survives, but the Blackstaff has left him alone as Artor has been able to destroy or drive off every other vampire within the city until now, and Khelben considers the presence of the vampire lord a small price to pay for the lack of other resident vampires in Waterdeep. Now, Khelben has deduced that the PCs' recent exploration of the Dungeon of the Crypt has spooked the Baron of Blood. Khelben believes that the mysterious vampire had Asraf abducted to serve as a bargaining chip against the Blackstaff's interference, but the disappearance has reignited Khelben's interest in the Fireplace Level.

If you use this adventure hook, you should note that Asraf is not actually being held within the Fireplace Level. The details of his kidnapping (and whether or not Artor was actually behind it) are beyond the scope of this adventure.

If you are running "The Fireplace Level" as a stand-alone adventure, you can use the following hook to bring in the PCs:

Unger Farshal (NE male Tethyrian human fighter 8), proprietor of the Grinning Lion (N56), has long made regular drug runs between Skullport and the City of Splendors on behalf of the Two-Cities Consortium. One of Unger's regular routes leads down the stairway beneath the Grinning Lion's midden, through part of the Fireplace Level, down into Fhang's lair (C35), and from there down to Skullport. Unger has yet to explore all of the Fireplace Level, but he has forged an agreement with Fhang that allows him to pass through the doppelganger vampire's lair safely. Artor is aware of Unger's movements, but for now allows him to proceed unmolested (and has instructed his various servitors and the ghosts to do the same), in order to use Unger as a lure in a long-standing plot to draw Dhusarra out of Undermountain (see "Blood of Malar").

Dhusarra

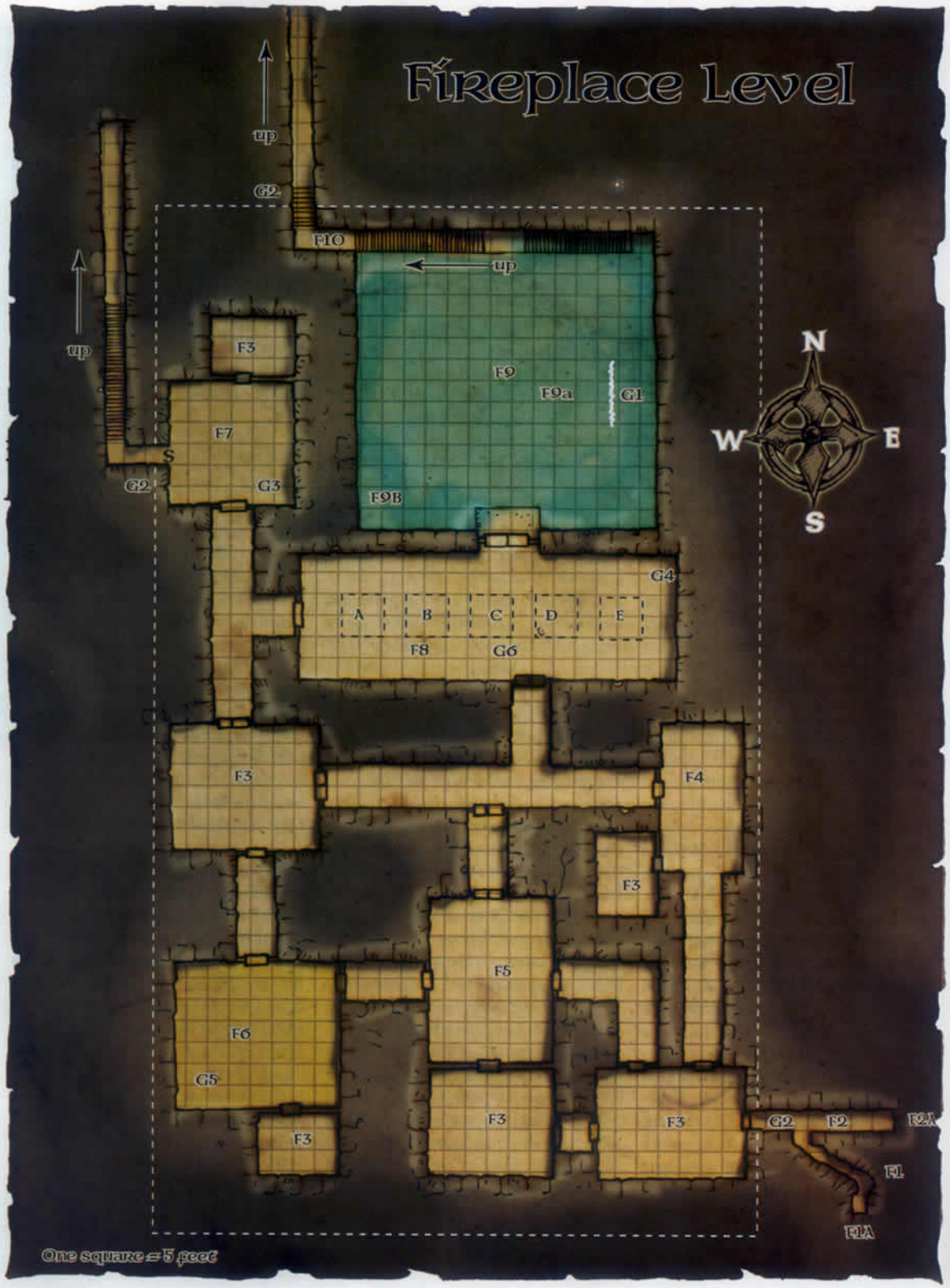
If Dhusarra survived the previous adventure, she may initially believe Artor Morlin has been destroyed, but her first attempt to leave the city or return to Undermountain quickly disabuses her of that notion. Whether Fhang survives or not, once Dhusarra realizes Artor Morlin is still alive, she continues to "prod" the PCs, as outlined in "Blood of Malar," while indirectly shadowing their progress through divination magic and her minions. Dhusarra continues to wait in the wings for an appropriate time to intervene in any battle between the PCs and the real Artor Morlin, but she is far more hesitant to do so if she was duped by Fhang into revealing herself prematurely at the conclusion of "Dungeon of the Crypt."

During a recent foray into the Fireplace Level, Unger chanced upon an old family heirloom of House Gundwynd, one of the noble families who make up the Two-Cities Consortium, a powerful merchant organization responsible for trafficking contraband between Skullport and Waterdeep. Unger sold the heirloom to **Lord Delnath Gundwynd** (LE male Illuskan aristocrat 9), the younger brother of the Gundwynd family patriarch, but the drug-running tavernkeeper refused to divulge where he found it. Lord Delnath hires the PCs to follow Unger and see if they can uncover a lost chapter of the Gundwynd family history.

The Fireplace Level

Located beneath the southern end of North Ward, just above and north of the Dungeon of the Crypt, the Fireplace Level is hewn from the plateau on which the City of Splendors sits. Built by ancestors of House Gost as a staging area and storehouse for their extensive portal network, the Fireplace Level is now quiet and forgotten, used only by Artor Morlin and his minions and the industrious drug-runner, Unger Farshal.

The stonework in the dungeon is of relatively old workmanship and typically made of granite. Unless otherwise noted, the corridor width remains a constant 10 feet. Height varies where noted but is usually 12 feet.


Fireplace Level
up
G2
F10
up
F3
F9
F9a
G1
up
F7
S
G2
G3
F9B
N
W
E
S
G4
A
B
C
D
E
F8
G6
F3
F4
F3
F5
F6
G5
F3
F3
F3
G2
F2
F2A
F1
F1A
One square = 5 feet

Doors are of metal-bound oak inlaid on both sides with 1-foot-square steel plates, each depicting a coiled snake (the symbol of House Gost) in bas-relief. A DC 10 Search check reveals a small hole through the door from the mouth of one snake-head to the other, large enough for passage by an ooze or creature in gaseous form. Semicircular arches surmount each doorway.

Typical Oak and Iron Door: 2 in. thick; Hardness 5; hp 20; Break DC 28, Open Lock (when appropriate) DC 30.

Typical Masonry Wall: 1 ft. thick; Hardness 8; hp 90; Break DC 35; Climb DC 15.

F1. Wormshake Fissure

This narrow three-foot-high, three-foot-wide fissure twists and bends through the surrounding stone.

The fissure opened up over six decades ago, in the Year of Catacombs (1308 DR). It is just large enough to permit passage by a size Medium or smaller creature. Medium creatures must squeeze to pass through this passage. This fissure can be found with a DC 30 Search check made in the fireplace flue (area **F1A**).

F1A. Fireplace Flue

A narrow vertical shaft meets a horizontal fissure in the earth here. A faint, flickering light is barely visible down below.

This chimney flue connects the fireplaces in areas **C35** and **C36** in the Dungeon of the Crypt with an unremarkable chimney top amidst the rooftops of North Ward.

The flue is 240 feet in length. (The last 40 feet of the flue lies between two rowhouses in North Ward.) The fissure is 120 feet above the fireplace in the Dungeon of the Crypt. The light is from the *continual flame* cast upon the logs of the two fireplaces.

A creature in gaseous form can easily make its way up the flue to exit amidst the rooftops of North Ward, seemingly just another puff of smoke. A DC 15 Knowledge (architecture and engineering) check at the intersection reveals that the fissure opened after the flue was built. The flue is just large enough for a Medium or smaller creature to inch their way up or down with a DC 15 Climb check.

F2. Hall of Shattered Stone

Most of the stonework in this long, narrow corridor has been shattered. The walls, floor, and ceiling bulge outward, suggesting something far too large for this hallway was shoved inside it.

In the Year of the Catacombs (1308 DR), a purple worm passed through the Wormwrithings Portal (**F2A**) and appeared here. The damage might have been far worse if the *temporal stasis* trap in the hallway had not caught the gigantic worm at the location marked **F2B**.

The Company of Crazed Venturers stumbled across the purple worm in the Year of the Gate (1341 DR). Calling on connections that Company members Nain and Savengriff had with Blackstaff Tower, the Company managed to have the body of the worm removed, after they transformed it into solid silver with the help of a magic item. Khelben later cast *gate seal* on the portal "for the security of the city" before departing.

The tale of the gigantic silver worm can be recalled with a DC 25 Knowledge (history) or bardic knowledge check. Likewise, if the PCs meet with one of the members of the now-disbanded company, such as Nain Keenwhistler, he too can relate this story.

Trap: Inscribed in the floor are the arms of House Gost, a deep green snake on a yellow field with a white eye with a red iris. Anyone who passes over this symbol risks triggering the trap, unless they possess a bypass key (a badge bearing the crest of House Gost). The obvious clue to the trap's location is deliberate, as the trap was intended to catch dangerous monsters stumbling through the portal, not sentient humanoids.

***Temporal Stasis* Trap**: CR 9; magic device; proximity trigger (*alarm*); automatic reset; key or command word bypass ("Gostwrithings"); spell effect (*temporal stasis*, 15th-level wizard, DC 22 Fortitude negates), multiple targets (up to 15 creatures); Search DC 33; Disable Device DC 33.

F2A. Wormwrithings Portal (EL 13)

The hallway ends in a blank arch that has been filled in with stone.

A DC 25 Search check reveals that the archway and the stone that blocks it were constructed together. In other words, the archway never led anywhere.

If anyone casts a spell or employs a spell-like ability in the hallway, it triggers the partial activation of a portal, filling the archway with a shimmering, silver light.

This portal leads to the Wormwrithings, a large region of twisting tunnels north and west of ruined Blingdenstone beneath the Lurkwood. The Wormwrithings are tunnels left behind by dozens of purple worms over many years. These tunnels are now home to several large bands of kobolds, and connect to the surface world near the Goblintide River. A *gate seal* spell (see sidebar) currently locks the portal.

Creature: A pair of portal drakes lurks on the other side of the portal in the Wormwrithings. If the portal is activated, the drakes employ their *portal jump* ability to transport themselves to this hallway (**F2**) and attack. The *gate seal* does not impede this ability. Once the portal drakes arrive, however, the narrow width of the passage impedes their movement, armor class, and attack rolls. See the rules on squeezing through narrow spaces in the *Player's Handbook*, page 148.

Advanced Portal Drakes (2) **CR 11**
NE Large dragon
Underdark 98
Init +6; **Senses** darkvision 60 ft., low-light vision, portal sight; Spot +19, Listen +19
Languages Draconic, Undercommon
AC 16, touch 9, flat-footed 16
hp 157 (15 HD)
Immune sleep, paralysis
Fort +13, **Ref** +9, **Will** +10
Spd 40 ft., burrow 20 ft., fly 90 ft. (average)
Melee bite +22 (3d6+8) and 2 claws +20 (1d8+4)
Space 10 ft.; **Reach** 5 ft. (10 ft. with bite)
Base Atk +15; **Grp** +27
Atk Options Flyby Attack, Power Attack
Special Atk breath weapon 5/day (40-ft. cone of poisonous gas; 1d4 Str/

New spell

Gate seal

Abjuration
Level: Brd 6, Clr 6, Drd 6, Sor/Wiz 6
Components: V, S, M
Casting Time: 1 standard action
Range: Close (25 ft. + 5 ft./2 levels)
Target: One *gate* or portal
Duration: Permanent
Saving Throw: None
Spell Resistance: No

You permanently seal a *gate* or portal. *Gate seal* prevents passage through the *gate* or portal, though the seal may be negated by a successful *dispel magic* cast upon the spell. A *knock* spell does not function on the *gate seal*, but a *chime of opening* dispels the seal.

Material Component: A silver bar worth 50 gp.

This spell first appeared in the *Forgotten Realms Campaign Setting*, page 70.

New feat

Portal Sensitive: The portal drakes can detect an active or inactive portal as if it were a normal secret door (Search DC 20). If they merely pass within 5 feet of a portal, they are entitled to a Search check to notice it as if they were actively looking for it.

They also gain a +2 bonus on their caster level checks when trying to discern portal properties with the *analyze portal* spell.

This feat first appeared in *Underdark*.

unconsciousness; Fort DC 21 resists; 1d4 rounds between uses)
Spell-like Abilities (CL 15th):
At will—*detect magic*
1/day—*blur*, *mirror image*
Abilities Str 26, Dex 10, Con 18, Int 15, Wis 12, Cha 14
SQ *portal jump* 4/day
Feats Flyby Attack, Improved Initiative, Improved Natural Attack (bite), Multiattack, Portal Sensitive[B], Power Attack, Quicken Spell-Like Ability (*portal jump*)
Skills Bluff +20, Concentration +22, Disguise +2 (+4 acting), Hide +18, Intimidate +4, Listen +19, Move Silently +18, Spellcraft +20 (+22 deciphering scrolls), Spot +19, Use Magic Device +20 (+22 scrolls)

***Portal Jump* (Sp):** Four times per day, a portal drake can enter any portal and emerge from any other portal through which it has traveled. CL 15th.

Portal Sight (Su): A portal drake can look through any portal and see out of any other portal through which it has traveled. This effect does not change perceptions or properties of the portal on the other side. A portal drake cannot cast spells through a portal. CL 15th.

Development: If the PCs remove the *gate seal*, they are free to explore the Wormwrithings and the portal network beyond. However, the Wormwrithings and Gost portal nexus are beyond the scope of this adventure.

If the PCs attempt to negotiate with the portal drakes, they might be able to forge an alliance if they can raise the portal drakes' attitude to friendly (it begins as hostile) and offer to guide them to a heretofore-unknown portal. (Two such portals may be found in area **F9**.) In exchange, the portal drakes might agree to work with the PCs to defeat any current portal guardians (such as the vampiric merfolk in area **F9** or the devourers in area **G1**) and allow the PCs unhindered passage through these portals.

F3. Storerooms

This rectangular chamber is largely empty, although remnants of broken crates, shattered amphoras, and other debris suggest it may have once served as a storeroom.

Treasure: A DC 15 Search check uncovers 1d10 gp, 1d10 sp, and 1d10 cp, or a valuable trinket worth 1d10 gp. There is a 5% chance that any trinket found bears the crest of House Gundwynd.

F4. Blood fiend prison (EL 14)

The door opens to a large, featureless, rectangular room. The floor is covered with a thick layer of dust, and here and there has been stained with splotches of a dark liquid.

This room once served as a storeroom for the members of House Gost and their servants, but Artor Morlin has cleaned it out and made it into a prison cell.

Creatures: In his efforts to better understand vampirism, Artor Morlin has added a blood fiend demon to his collection of vampiric captives. This room serves as the blood fiend's hedged prison (a specific application of the *binding* spell) cast by a wizard hired by Artor.

When the PCs arrive, the fiend stands in the center of the room in the form of an immense gray wolf with fiery eyes and a thick coat of fur. It is enthusiastically biting into the neck of a dretch. The blood fiend is simply toying with the dretch. The undead demon dares not destroy the dretch, for it might be years before Artor bothers to acquire him another one. If the PCs move to intervene, the fiend reverts into its normal form (an ogre-sized, four-armed, black-scaled monster with a wolflike muzzle).

Blood Fiend CR 14
CE Large undead (extraplanar)
Fiend Folio 47
Init +6; **Senses** darkvision 60 ft.; Spot +20, Listen +20
Languages Abyssal
AC 31, touch 11, flat-footed 29; Dodge, Mobility
hp 78 (12 HD); **DR** 15/good; fast healing 5
SR 24
Resists acid 20, cold 20, fire 20
Immune electricity, undead traits
Fort +4, **Ref** +8, **Will** +13
Spd 40 ft., fly 80 ft. (perfect)
Melee 4 claws +13 (1d6+8 plus energy drain) bite +8 (1d8+4 plus blood drain)
Space 10 ft.; **Reach** 10 ft.
Base Atk +6; **Grp** +18
Special Atk create spawn, dominate
Spell-like Abilities (CL 18th):
At will—*detect good*, *detect magic*, *greater teleport* (self plus 50 lbs. of objects only)
3/day—*chaos hammer* (DC 19), *darkness*, *unholy blight* (DC 19)
1/day—*blasphemy* (DC 22), *desecrate*
Abilities Str 26, Dex 15, Con —, Int 17, Wis 20, Cha 21
SQ alternate form, gaseous form, turn resistance +6
Feats Combat Reflexes, Dodge, Improved Initiative, Lightning Reflexes, Mobility
Skills Concentration +20, Diplomacy +7, Hide +17, Intimidate +4, Listen +20, Move Silently +17, Search +19, Sense Motive +20, Spot +20, Survival +5

Blood Drain (Su): A blood fiend sucks blood from a living creature when it hits with its

bite attack. Each successful bite deals 1d4 points of Constitution drain.

Dominate (Su): This attack functions like a gaze attack, except that it is a standard action, and creatures merely looking at the blood fiend are not affected. Any creature within 30 feet that the blood fiend targets for the attack is affected by a *dominate monster* spell (CL 18; Will save DC 21).

Energy Drain (Su): Any living creature hit by a blood fiend's claw attack must succeed on a DC 21 Fortitude save or gain 1 negative level. It is also a DC 21 Fortitude save to remove these negative levels. For each negative level bestowed, the blood fiend gains 5 temporary hit points.

Alternate Form (Su): A blood fiend can assume the form of a regular or fiendish dire bat, a dire wolf, a howler, or a nightmare as a standard action. This ability functions like a *polymorph* spell (CL 12) except that the demon also gains the extraordinary special qualities of the form assumed and does not regain hit points for changing forms. The blood fiend can remain in its new form indefinitely.

Create Spawn (Su): An outsider of the evil subtype slain by a blood fiend's energy drain attack rises as a blood fiend 1d4 days after death. The new blood fiend does not retain any of the abilities it had in life.

Fast Healing (Ex): A blood fiend heals 5 hit points per round as long as it has at least 1 hit point. If reduced to 0 hit points or lower, a blood fiend automatically assumes gaseous form and attempts to escape. Its fast healing begins as soon as it has rested for 1 hour. A *dismissal*, *dispel evil*, *banishment*, *dictum*, or *holy word* spell cast on it while its current hit points are below 1 destroys it utterly.

Gaseous Form (Su): At will, a blood fiend can assume *gaseous form* (as the spell, CL 5th). The blood fiend can remain gaseous indefinitely and has a fly speed of 20 feet (perfect).

Dretch: hp 5 (normally 13); *Monster Manual* 42.

F5. Chamber of the Chalice (EL 8)

This rectangular chamber is largely empty, although remnants of broken crates, shattered amphoras, and other debris suggest it may have once served as a storeroom. In the center of the room is a white marble pedestal, above which floats a glowing, gem-encrusted chalice.

The Gost family constructed this trap to catch any thief who broke into their complex. Artor finds the trap amusing, so he has left it alone.

Treasure: This room has the same random treasure as **F3** (see above).

Trap: The ceiling, chalice, and pedestal are all illusions, created by a *permanent image* spell and part of a deadly trap. If the chalice, pedestal, or ceiling is physically touched in any way, all three images briefly vanish, as does the *wall of force* above the illusion of the ceiling. Sitting atop the *wall of force* are dozens of massive gold ingots, which fall into the room below once the *wall of force* effect is gone. Note that the trap regularly recreates gold ingots by means of a *major creation* spell and the gold does not last long after the trap has been triggered.

Chalice Trap: CR 8; magic device; proximity trigger (*alarm*); automatic reset; multiple targets (all creatures in the room); falling gold ingots (8d6 damage, Reflex DC 24 halves); Search DC 32; Disable Device 32.

Development: The workings of this trap are obvious to anyone on the Ethereal Plane.

F6. Hall of Gibbering Madness (EL 13)

This rectangular chamber is largely empty. The floor of this room is unlike the rest of the dungeon, for it appears to be made of soft sand.

This chamber once served as a storeroom for the members of House Gost and their servants, but Artor Morlin has cleaned it out and made it a prison cell for a creature he has named "The Blood of Ghaundaur."

Creature: During Halaster's Higharvestide in the Year of the Gauntlet (1369 DR), all manner of bizarre creatures were discharged into the City of Splendors via hitherto unknown portals from the depths of Undermountain. Artor caught one such creature, a gibbering mouther of unusual size that had been somehow transformed into a vampire amidst the Caverns of Ooze (UM L7) by the will of Ghaunadaur, even though aberrations are normally immune to such a transformation. The creature is now imprisoned in this room for further study.

Blood of Ghaunadaur **CR 11**

Vampire advanced gibbering mouther
NE Large undead
Lords of Madness 150; *Monster Manual* 250
Init +6; **Senses** darkvision 60 ft.; Spot +33, Listen +37
Languages Common

AC 28, touch 12, flat-footed 26; Dodge
hp 145 (20 HD); fast healing 5; **DR** 10/silver and magic, 5/bludgeoning
Resist cold 10, electricity 10,
Immune undead traits
Fort +8, **Ref** +10, **Will** +14
Weaknesses vampire weaknesses (not vulnerable to immersion in running water)

Spd 10 ft., swim 20 ft., climb 20 ft.
Melee bite +23 (1d3+9 plus energy drain) and 5 bites +23 (1d3+9) or
slam +23 (1d8+13 plus energy drain)
Ranged spittle +16 ranged touch (1d6 acid plus blindness)
Space 10 ft.; **Reach** 10 ft.
Base Atk +15; **Grp** +26
Atk Options improved grab
Special Atk blood drain, children of the night, create spawn, dominate (DC 23), gibbering (DC 23), ground manipulation, swallow whole

Abilities Str 28, Dex 15, Con —, Int 10, Wis 15, Cha 17
SQ amorphous, alternate form, gaseous form, spider climb, turn resistance +4
Feats Alertness[B], Combat Reflexes[B], Dodge[B], Great Fortitude, Improved Initiative[B], Improved Natural Attack (bite), Lightning Reflexes[B], Toughness (x5)
Skills Bluff +11, Hide +6, Listen +33, Move Silently +10, Search +8, Sense Motive +10, Spot +37, Swim +17

Alternate Form (Su): The Blood of Ghaunadaur can assume the shape of any ooze of size Large or smaller at will as a standard action. This ability functions as the *polymorph* spell (CL 12) except that the Blood of Ghaunadaur does not regain hit points for changing form and may only assume ooze forms. It can stay

in its new form until it assumes another or until the next sunrise.

Amorphous (Ex): The Blood of Ghaunadaur cannot be flanked.

Blood Drain (Ex): A swallowed opponent automatically takes 1d4 points of Constitution drain each round and the Blood of Ghaunadaur automatically gains 5 temporary hit points.

Children of the Night (Su): The Blood of Ghaunadaur commands the lesser oozes of the world and once per day can call forth 1d3 gray oozes, 1d2 ochre jellies, or 1 gelatinous cube as a standard action. These creatures arrive in 2d6 rounds and serve the Blood of Ghaunadaur for up to 1 hour.

Gibbering (Su): As soon as the Blood of Ghaunadaur spots something edible, it begins a constant gibbering as a free action. All creatures (other than gibbering mouthers) within a 60-foot spread must succeed on a DC 23 Will save or be affected as though by a *confusion* spell for 1d2 rounds. This is a sonic mind-affecting compulsion effect. A creature that successfully saves cannot be affected by the Blood of Ghaunadaur's gibbering for 24 hours. The save DC is Charisma-based.

Ground Manipulation (Su): At will, as a standard action, the Blood of Ghaunadaur can cause stone and earth in all adjacent squares to become a morass akin to quicksand. Softening earth, sand, or the like takes 1 round, while stone takes 2 rounds. Anyone other than the Blood of Ghaunadaur in that area must take a move-equivalent action to avoid becoming mired (treat as being pinned).

Improved Grab (Ex): To use this ability, the Blood of Ghaunadaur must hit a Large or smaller foe with a bite attack. It can then attempt to start a grapple as a free action without provoking attacks of opportunity.

Spittle (Ex): As a free action every round, the Blood of Ghaunadaur can fire a stream of spittle at one opponent within 30 feet. It makes a ranged touch attack; if it hits, it deals 1d4 points of acid damage, and the target must make a DC 23 Fortitude save or be blinded for 1d4 rounds. Eyeless creatures are immune to the blinding effect but are still subject to the acid damage. The save DC is Charisma-based.

Swallow Whole (Ex): The Blood of Ghaunadaur can attempt to swallow a grappled opponent of Large or smaller size by making a successful grapple check. A swallowed creature can cut its way out by dealing 5 points of damage to the Blood of Ghaunadaur (AC 28). Once the creature exits, muscular action closes the hole; another swallowed opponent must cut its own way out. Blood of Ghaunadaur's body can hold 1 Large, 2 Medium, 4 Small, 16 Tiny, 64 Diminutive, or 256 Fine creatures.

Trap: The Blood of Ghaunadaur has transformed the floor of this room into a morass akin to quicksand. Each round each creature other than the Blood of Ghaunadaur in the morass must take a move-equivalent action to keep from being mired (treat as being pinned, see the *Player's Handbook* page 156).

Treasure: Buried amidst the morass of the floor are various lost treasures and trinkets. A DC 15 Search check recovers 340 gp worth of coins and trinkets. Buried beneath the morass in the southwest corner (Search DC 25) is *Gostclaw*, a *+1 ghost touch spellblade (magic jar) longsword*, a magic weapon employed by the scions of House Gost while passing through the Fireplace Level on the way to the Gost portal network and lost in battle with the Gundwynd ghosts.

Development: The morass is considered the Blood of Ghaunadaur's "coffin." If slain, it returns to the morass in gaseous form and assumes its normal form under the sand. The resultant uplift in the floor readily indicates the creature's location while it recovers.

F7. Unger Farshal's Storeroom

This large, rectangular room is largely empty, save for an old wooden chair and table along the west wall.

This room once served as a storeroom for House Gost. It has been emptied of treasure, although traces of debris still remain. **Unger Farshal** (NE male Tethyrian human fighter 8, detailed in "Blood of Malar") passes through this room on his way to and from the Dungeon of the Crypt, and sometimes stops here to clean himself up after a harrowing trip or to rearrange the drugs he is carrying before heading up to the surface.

New Magic Item Property: Spellblade

The wielder of a spellblade weapon is immune to a single spell chosen at the time the weapon is created. The selected spell must be one that is targeted against the wielder, not one that affects an area or creates an effect. When the wielder is next subjected to the chosen spell, the weapon absorbs it. On his next turn, he can opt to either let the spell drain harmlessly away or direct it at a new target as a free action.

Strong abjuration; CL 13th; Craft Magic Arms and Armor, *spell turning*; Price 6,000 gp.

This property first appeared in the *Player's Guide to Faerûn*, page 120.

Development: A DC 10 Search check of the table reveals traces of white powder. A DC 15 Craft (poisonmaking) check reveals this to be mordayn powder, from which mordayn vapor (also known as "dreammist") can be brewed. Unger sometimes uses this table to repackage coffers of moradyn powder into smaller packages. (Mordayn powder is detailed in *Lords of Darkness*, page 183.)

Finding the secret door on the west wall requires a DC 35 Search check. It leads to a narrow passage that runs west and then bends north to an ascending staircase. The stair leads up (over 70 feet of vertical ascent) to a second secret door beneath the bottom 3 steps (which swing up) of the Stairs of the Lion (see "Blood of Malar").

Only Unger and Artor know of the existence of this passage, although Fhang suspects it exists.

F8. Chamber of the Beast Cages (EL Varies)

Five ten-foot-square cages run down the center of this long, barrel-vaulted hall. The walls of each cage run from floor to ceiling, and there is a small, five-foot-square door in the south wall of each cage. The westernmost cage contains the bones of some large creature and a gaunt, hairless humanoid curled up in the fetal position. It appears to be making a bizarre wailing noise. Strange translucent humanoid forms writhe in the remaining four cages.

This room was used to hold rare beasts captured by agents of House Gond and brought back through the portal network. The creatures were held here awaiting sale to jaded scions of the nobility and twisted members of strange beast cults. The westernmost cage (**F8A**) contains the bones of an owlbear.

Creatures: The humanoid in **F8D** is actually a vampiric mind flayer. It is confined to this room by a hedged prison instance of the *binding* spell, not unlike the blood fiend of **F4**.

The center cage holds four ghostly, translucent human figures: the Gundwynd Ghosts. One quietly sobs while the others wail and moan and shake the bars of their cage. The Gundwynd ghosts are the spiritual remnants of the four senior-most members of the Gundwynd clan who died of starvation while imprisoned by House Gost. All four ghosts retain the rich robes they prized in life, but none were armed at the time of their death and thus none possess any ghostly weapons or armor.

All four ghosts exist only to gain vengeance on the scions of House Gost. None can be permanently laid to rest until it has killed a descendant of Lord Geldirth II.

GUNDWYND GHOSTS (4) **CR 12**

Male and female ghost (augmented Illuskan human) aristocrat 11
N Medium undead (incorporeal)
Monster Manual 116
Init +0; **Senses** Spot –1, Listen –1
Languages Chondathan, Common, Illuskan

AC 10 (11 when manifesting), touch 10 (11 when manifesting), flat-footed 10 (11 when manifesting)
hp 74 (11 HD)
Immune undead traits
Fort +3, **Ref** +5, **Will** +8

Spd fly 30 ft. (perfect)
Melee corrupting touch +8 (1d6 melee touch)
Base Atk +8; **Grp** +8
Special Atks malevolence (DC 18), manifest, frightful moan (DC 18)

Abilities Str 11, Dex 10, Con —, Int 12, Wis 9, Cha 13

SQ rejuvenation, turn resistance +4
Feats Ability Focus (malevolence), Ability Focus (frightful moan), Iron Will, Lightning Reflexes, Toughness
Skills Appraise +15, Bluff +15, Disguise +1 (+3 acting), Diplomacy +21, Gather Information +17, Intimidate +3, Knowledge (local) +10, Knowledge (nobility and royalty) +6, Sense Motive +13

VAMPIRE MIND FLAYER **CR 9**

CE Medium Undead
Lords of Madness 160
Init +10; **Senses** darkvision 60 ft.; Spot +22, Listen +20
Languages none

AC 23, touch 16, flat-footed 17
hp 52 (8 HD); fast healing 5; **DR** 10/silver and magic
SR 25
Resist cold 10, electricity 10,
Immune undead traits
Fort +2, **Ref** +8, **Will** +9

Spd 30 ft., climb 20 ft.
Melee tentacle +10 (1d4+4 plus energy drain) and 3 tentacles +10 (1d3+4) and slam +8 (1d6+2) or slam +10 (1d6+6 plus energy drain)
Base Atk +4; **Grp** +8
Atk Options improved grab
Special Atks blood drain, extract, *mind blast*

Abilities Str 18, Dex 22, Con —, Int 7, Wis 17, Cha 15
SQ telepathy 100 ft., turn resistance +4
Feats Alertness, Improved Initiative, Multiattack, Weapon Finesse[B]
Skills Bluff +21, Concentration +17, Diplomacy +9, Disguise +5 (+7 acting), Hide +21, Intimidate +13, Knowledge (dungeoneering) +14, Listen +20, Move Silently +22, Search +8, Sense Motive +16, Spot +22

Blood Drain (Ex): A vampire mind flayer that attaches a tentacle to its foe drains blood, dealing 1d4 points of Constitution damage and gaining 5 temporary hit points per point drained during each round that it keeps at least one tentacle attached.
Energy Drain (Su): Living creatures hit by a vampire mind flayer's tentacles or slam attack gain two negative levels. For each negative level bestowed, the vampire mind flayer gains 5 temporary hit points. This energy drain ability can be used once per round.
Extract (Ex): A vampire mind flayer that begins its turn with all four tentacles attached and makes a successful grapple check automatically extracts the opponent's brain, instantly killing that creature. This power is useless against constructs, elementals, oozes, plants, and undead. It is not instantly fatal to creatures with multiple heads.
Improved Grab (Ex): To use this ability, a vampire mind flayer must hit a Small, Medium, or Large creature with a tentacle attack. It can then attempt to start a grapple as a free action without provoking attacks of opportunity. If it wins the grapple check, it establishes a hold, attaches the tentacle to the opponent's head, and drains blood (see above). If a vampire mind flayer begins its turn with at least one tentacle attached, it drains blood and can try to attach its remaining tentacles with a single grapple check. The opponent can escape with a single successful grapple check or an Escape Artist check, but the vampire mind flayer gets a +2 circumstance bonus on the grapple check for each tentacle that was attached at the beginning of its opponent's turn.
***Mind Blast* (Sp):** This psionic attack affects a 60-ft. cone. Anyone in this cone must make a DC 16 Will save or be stunned for 3d4 rounds. The save DC is Charisma-based. This is the equivalent of a 4th-level spell.
Fast Healing (Ex): A vampire mind flayer heals 5 points of damage each round as long as it has at least 1 hit point. If it is reduced to 0 or fewer hit points, it is destroyed.

Tactics: The door to the vampiric mind flayer's cage has a broken lock. The monster is cunning enough to remain within the cage and attack with its *mind blast*. When a foe approaches, thinking the creature is locked within, the mind flayer jumps out and attacks.

Development: The Gundwynd ghosts have long awaited the appearance of a vampire-hunting adventuring company in the halls of the Fireplace Level. Rather than immediately attack, the Gundwynd Ghosts first attempt to negotiate. They know that Artor Morlin keeps his primary coffin on the Ethereal Plane. The ghosts offer to possess the PCs, telling them that while the ghosts posses their bodies, the PCs will be transferred to the ghosts' bodies on the Ethereal Plane. In exchange, they ask the PCs to later return the ghosts' bones to the family crypt in the City of the Dead. Unfortunately for the PCs, this is a lie. If the PCs agree (or the ghosts manage to possess any of them in combat) they

immediately head for the entrance to the Gost villa (area **F10**) and attack the Gost basement, hoping to end their curse. If the PCs refuse, the ghosts attack, hoping to take their bodies by force.

If the PCs manage to destroy two of the ghosts, the remaining two surrender. They have been here for a long time, and are growing desperate. They know about the portal to the Ethereal Plane in area **F9**, and offer to provide the PCs with this information in exchange for their freedom. There are two ways the PCs could free the ghosts, either by allowing a ghost to posses them and attacking the Gost villa, or by kidnapping a Gost scion and returning it here. If the PCs agree and manage to free the ghosts, they are willing to tell the PCs anything they want to know about the coterminous region of the Ethereal Plane, and creatures that wait there.

F9. Chamber of the Pool (EL 14)

A vast pool of inky, opaque water laps at the walls of this chamber. A small landing projects into the pool in the center of the south wall, while on the opposite side of the room a massive stone staircase rises from a similar platform. The ceiling soars to a height of nearly forty feet.

The water in this room comes from rainwater runoff pipes from the roofs and gutters in the city above. An overflow chute in the stone stair drains off the overflow down into the Underdark. PCs that make a DC 30 Spot check can make out the outlines of seven giant clamshells lying on the chamber floor. These clamshells are coffins for Arrick and his vampire spawn servitors. This chamber is the subject of an *unhallow* spell linked to a *protection from energy (electricity)* effect, renewed annually by Arrick.

Creatures: This chamber is the home of the merfolk vampire Arrick Kaarvol and his vampire spawn minions. This powerfully built male merman has the head, shoulders, and torso of a Calishite human. He has the feral, blood red eyes of a vampire and his mouth is the gaping, fanged orifice of a lamprey. His tail also possesses the smooth skin and two distinctive fins of a lamprey. He wields a powerful trident with tines in the shape of fangs and his shark-skin leather armor and purple-black cloak give him the appearance of a manta ray.

Arrick Kaarvol hails from Tharqualnaar, the merfolk village in the depths of Waterdeep's Deepwater Harbor. Artor observed Arrick's combat prowess during the invasion of Waterdeep by the Army of Iakhovas and decided to make the merman his spawn. At the time of his abduction, Arrick was the senior priest of Umberlee among Waterdeep's merfolk population. Arrick's fellow priests assumed their leader fell during the fighting and none are aware he survives as a vampire beneath the city. At Artor's instruction, the vampire merman created a pack of vampire spawn servitors of his own after ambushing a merfolk patrol in the sewers.

Arrick is a cruel, bloodthirsty predator who delights in the scent of blood in the water. He likes to wound his opponents and let them bleed into the water before finishing them off. Arrick thinks nothing of his spawn, treating them as simple pawns to be sacrificed as needed.

Arrick Kaarvol **CR 14**
Male vampire merfolk cleric 12 (Umberlee)
LE Medium undead (augmented humanoid, aquatic)
Monster Manual 185, 250
Init +7; **Senses** darkvision 60 ft.; low-light vision; Spot +15, Listen +15
Languages Abyssal, Aquan, Common

AC 27, touch 16, flat-footed 24; Dodge
hp 83 (12 HD); fast healing 5; **DR** 10/silver and magic
Resist cold 10, electricity 10
Immune undead traits
Fort +8, **Ref** +9, **Will** +13
Weaknesses vampire weaknesses (not vulnerable to immersion in running water)

Spd 5 ft. (1 square), climb 20 ft., swim 70 ft.
Melee +1 *wounding vampiric trident* +15/+10 (1d8+8/19–20 plus vampiric and wounding)
Base Atk +9; **Grp** +14
Atk Options Power Attack, Swim-By Attack, smite 1/day (+4 atk, +12 damage)
Special Atk blood drain, children of the night, create spawn, dominate (DC 19), rebuke undead 6/day (+5, 2d6+15, 12th)
Cleric Spells Prepared (CL 12th [CL13 for evil spells])
6th—*antilife shell*, *banishment* (DC 21), *create undead*[D]
5th—*dispel good* (DC 20), *greater command* (DC 20), *mass inflict light wounds*[D] (DC 20), *righteous might*, *summon monster V*
4th—*control water*, *dimensional anchor* (3), *unholy blight*[D] (DC 19)
3rd—*deeper darkness*, *dispel magic* (2), *invisibility purge*, *magic circle against good*[D] (DC 18), *prayer*
2nd—*align weapon, bull's strength* (2), *desecrate*[D] (DC 17), *gentle repose*, *silence* (DC 17)
1st—*bane* (DC 16) (2), *curse water* (DC 16), *divine favor* (2), *obscuring mist*, *protection from good*[D], *sanctuary* (DC 16)
0—*detect magic* (3), *resistance* (2), *virtue*
D: Domain spell; *Domains*: Destruction, Evil
Abilities Str 20, Dex 17, Con —, Int 12, Wis 20, Cha 16
SQ alternate form, gaseous form, spider climb, +4 turn resitance
Feats Alertness[B], Combat Reflexes[B], Dodge[B], Improved Critical (trident), Improved Initiative[B], Lightning Reflexes[B], Martial Weapon Proficiency (trident), Power Attack, Rapid Swimming, Swim-By Attack
Skills Bluff +11, Concentration +18, Hide +11, Knowledge (religion) +16, Knowledge (the planes) +11, Listen +15, Move Silently +11, Search +9, Sense Motive +13, Spellcraft +6, Spot +15
Possessions *Piranha's Teeth* (+1 *wounding vampiric trident*), *ring of protection +3*, *Sharktooth Scales* (+2 *sharkskin armor*)
Children of the Night (Su): Arrick commands the lesser creatures of the sea and once per day can call forth 1d8+1 leech swarms (*Stormwrack* 166), 1d2+1 piranha swarms (*Stormwrack* 162), or a school of 3d6 Medium sharks (*Monster Manual* 279) as a standard action. These creatures arrive in 2d6 rounds and serve Arrick for up to 1 hour.

Merfolk vampire spawn (6): hp 29; Medium undead (aquatic); Speed 5 ft., swim 50 ft.; SQ not vulnerable to immersion in running water; *Monster Manual* 253.

Tactics: Although he can maneuver overland in physical or gaseous form, Arrick prefers to remain within the waters of the pool, where he is in his element. Arrick lets his minions fight for as long as possible, sending his pack of merfolk vampire spawn into melee while he supports them with spells. He also uses his children of the night ability to send piranha swarms after the PCs and summons a fiendish giant crocodile with *summon monster V*. If PC spellcasters stand on the landings, he floods them with *control water*. Once the vampire enters melee, he likes to wound each of his foes and then finish them off one by one.

Arrick's primary objective is to prevent interlopers from passing through the portals at the bottom of the pool, especially the metallic silver curtain to the Ethereal Plane. If the PCs appear to be heading in that direction, he casts *antilife shell* on himself and takes position in front of the curtain. If the PCs get through the silver curtain and Arrick survives, the vampire follows them to the Ethereal Plane, where he can move at his swim speed. He then employs *banishment* and *dispel good* to send them back to the Material Plane.

Rules for underwater combat are given on page 92 of the *Dungeon Master's Guide*.

Development: The pool is not considered running water. If the PCs manage to transform it into running water Artor and Medechai are incapable of moving safely through the pool (and hence incapable of using the silver curtain at **F9A**).

If the PCs destroy Artor Morlin before reaching this chamber, Arrick is freed from his enslavement. In this case Arrick waits until nightfall and then leaves the dungeon in gaseous form, traveling back to the harbor with his vampire spawn minions. Note that he loses the +2 enhancement bonus to Strength and Dexterity he received from Artor's enhanced spawn ability (see area **G5**).

F9A. Silver Curtain

A shimmering curtain of metallic silver hue shines dimly through the inky, opaque water.

New Magic Item Special Ability

Vampiric: Any living opponent struck by a vampiric weapon must make a DC 16 Fortitude save or lose an additional 1d4 hit points, which are immediately added to the wielder's current hit point total. Any hit points above the wielder's maximum are treated as temporary hit points (multiple additions of temporary hit points don't stack) and disappear after 1 hour.

Moderate necromancy; CL 7th; Craft Magic Arms and Armor, *vampiric touch*; Price +2 bonus.

New Feats

Rapid Swimming: Arrik's swim speed is increased by 20 feet.

This feat first appeared in *Stormwrack*.

Swim-By Attack: While swimming, Arrik can take a move action and another standard action (such as an attack) at any point during the move. He cannot take a second move action during a round when he makes a swim-by attack.

This feat first appeared in *Stormwrack*.

The silver shimmering curtain is a two-way, opaque portal connecting the Material Plane to area **G1** on the Ethereal Plane. The curtain is large enough to permit passage of any creature of size Large or smaller. This portal has one unusual feature: it allows one creature to pass through it (in either direction) and then shuts down for 3 rounds.

F9B. Morlin Catacombs Portal

This keyed, one-way portal resembles another bricked-up stone archway and leads to Artor's former lair in the dungeons of old Morlin Castle (which now lie buried beneath Castle Daggerford). The portal's key is Artor's two-bladed sword, Shoonfangs. This portal is Artor's escape route, should his lair within the City of Splendors become wholly compromised.

Details of the Morlin Catacombs are beyond the scope of this adventure.

F10. Blackstaff's Visage (EL 12)

The stern and imposing visage of a human male with straight black hair, receding at the

temples, floats in the air here. He also has a black beard with a shock of white on the chin. The face is nearly six feet high and translucent. It bellows, "Turn back, whoever you are! Trespass in this area is prohibited!"

A DC 10 Knowledge (local) check identifies the face as that of Khelben "Blackstaff" Arunsun. Khelben actually had nothing to do with its placement here; it was a whim of the Gost patriarch who had the complex sealed up.

Trap: A series of overlapping traps wards this hallway. In addition to the ghostbane trap on the Ethereal Plane (see **G2**), there are three separate magic traps here. The first trap is Blackstaff's visage. Anyone who passes through the image risks triggering the other two traps.

Blackstaff's visage: A *permanent image* effect is responsible for Khelben's image and voice.

***Forcecage* and *Summon Monster VII* Trap**: CR 10; magic device; proximity trigger (*alarm*); automatic reset; key bypass (badge bearing symbol of House Gost); multiple traps (one *forcecage* trap and one *summon monster VII* trap that summons a hamatula [*Monster Manual* 51] inside the *forcecage*); spell effect (*forcecage*, 13th-level wizard), spell effect (*summon monster VII*, 13th-level wizard, hamatula); Search DC 32; Disable Device 32.

***Feeblemind* and *Maze* Trap**: CR 10; magic device; proximity trigger (*alarm*); automatic reset; key bypass (badge bearing symbol of House Gost); multiple traps (one *feeblemind* trap and one *maze*); spell effect (*feeblemind*, 17th-level wizard), spell effect (*maze*, 17th-level wizard); Search DC 33; Disable Device 33.

THE GHOST CAGE

The Ghost Cage is an invisible box-shaped "structure" on the Ethereal Plane defined by overlapping *wall of force* spells that enclose the Fireplace Level on both the Ethereal and Material Planes.

The environment inside the Ghost Cage is identical to that of the Ethereal Plane as a whole. (See page 151 of the *Dungeon Master's Guide*.) It has a normal atmosphere and its residents can breathe normally. However, there is no food or water other than what travelers bring with them.

The Ghost Cage lies within the earth of the Material Plane, so much of it is filled with Material Plane objects (i.e. the walls, ceilings, floors, resident creatures, and resident objects of the Fireplace Level).

The PCs can reach the Ghost Cage in one of three ways. First, spells such as *ethereal jaunt*, *etherealness*, *gate*, or *plane shift* can move the PCs from the Material Plane to the Ethereal Plane and back. Second, several magic items (such as *ethereal armor*, a *cloak of etherealness*, or even a *ring of blinking*) can take the PCs to the Ethereal Plane. Third, there is a portal linking area **F9A** to area **G1** on the Ethereal Plane.

The Ghost Cage is home to a handful of creatures. As the walls, floors, ceilings, and objects of the Fireplace Level on the Material Plane impede vision, but not travel, most of the Ghost Cage's residents travel along the Material Plane "corridors" through which vision is possible. However, it is a simple matter to walk through a door or lurk within a wall if the situation warrants taking cover on the Ethereal Plane.

Given the nature of the Ethereal Plane, it is particularly difficult to spot creatures in gaseous form. A character must make a DC 20 Spot check to see spell effects such as *obscuring mist* or creatures in gaseous form. The vampires of the Ghost Cage take advantage of this as well.

G1. Color Curtain (EL 13)

Before you spreads an alien world of swirling mists and colorful fogs, behind you is a shimmering curtain of metallic quicksilver. You can perceive the outline of the pool surrounding you, wrapped in thick translucent multi-colored mist.

The silver shimmering curtain is a two-way, opaque portal connecting the Material Plane to area **G1** on the Ethereal Plane. The curtain is large enough to permit passage of size Large or smaller creatures. This portal has one unusual feature: it allows one creature to pass through it (in either direction) and then shuts down for 3 rounds.

Creature: A pair of undead horrors known as devourers guards this area. The devourers lurk within nearby walls, gaining total concealment until they attack. Although devourers are normally solitary, Artor Morlin tracked these two down individually in the depths of Undermountain and brought them back here to serve as guardians. The Baron of Blood commands them to attack any non-vampire attempting to pass through the curtain.

Devourers (2): hp 78 each; *Monster Manual* 58.

Treasure: Although the devourers have no treasure, the trapped essence within might be considered as such if freed. Artor periodically supplies the devourers with new creatures to consume, and one such victim might be an NPC known to the PCs in the past, chosen at random from among the citizens of Waterdeep.

G2. Cage Exit (EL 13 for ghosts)

There are three exits from the Ghost Cage, each corresponding to the three corridors that leave the Fireplace Level on the Material Plane. Each exit is a 10-foot gap in the *wall of force*, and a ghostbane trap wards each opening.

Trap: These ghostbane traps exist only on the Ethereal Plane. A ghost can bypass them by possessing a living creature.

Ghostbane Trap: CR 9; magic device; proximity trigger (*alarm*); automatic reset; spell effect (*antipathy* to ghosts, 15th-level wizard, DC 22 Will partial), multiple targets (up to 15 creatures); Search DC 33; Disable Device DC 33.

G3. Floating Helm (EL varies)

A gargantuan helm carved of greenish-brown stone some eight feet in diameter floats here. Its blank eyes are fashioned of shiny, silvery metal.

The stone helm is the severed "head" of a fallen Walking Statue of Waterdeep. (See *City of Splendors: Waterdeep*, pages 21, and 139–140, for details on these stone colossi.) A vampire medusa named Medechai chanced upon the ruins of a Walking Statue while exploring outside the Ghost Cage. She brought the head back here and had Arrick hollow out cavities behind each eye using *stone shape*. She now uses it as a unique coffin, with the mithral eyelids serving as the coffin's lid.

A DC 30 Spot check is needed to observe the small hole (1 inch in diameter) drilled in each mithral eyelid. Medechai enters and leaves her coffin by assuming gaseous form and passing through the tiny opening.

Creature: Medechai, a vampire medusa and chosen spawn of Artor Morlin, lairs within the head, which serves as her primary coffin. Clad in a form-fitting emerald green chain shirt with a limp-looking tangle of snakes atop her head, Medechai has the scaled skin of a female yuan-ti. Her earth-colored face is a hideous, scaled visage framing eyes that glow a deep, feral red. Although she lacks the fangs possessed by most vampires, each of her snakeheads possesses a miniature set of vampiric fangs.

Artor Morlin purchased Medechai as a child in the slave markets of Skullport some 30 years ago and brought her back to his lair. She was raised under his constant domination and then transformed into a vampire upon reaching adulthood. While the medusa loathes the Baron of Blood, she knows little of the outside world beyond the familiar confines of the Ghost Cage and the Fireplace Level.

Under Artor's tutelage, Medechai has become a cold-blooded killer interested only in dispatching her prey as quickly and efficiently as possible. She only shows emotion while drinking blood, her snakes writhing and hissing in ecstatic pleasure.

Artor has made Medechai his master's chosen (see area **G5** below). As long as he lives, she receives a +6 enhancement bonus to Strength and Dexterity. These adjustments have been included in her stat block below.

MEDECHAI **CR 14**

Female vampire medusa assassin 5

LE Medium undead (augmented monstrous humanoid)

Monster Manual 180, 250

Init +12; **Senses** darkvision 60 ft.; Spot +23, Listen +23

Languages Alzhedo, Common, Tethyrian

AC 35, touch 16, flat-footed 29; Dodge, improved uncanny dodge

hp 71 (11 HD); fast healing 5; **DR** 10/silver and magic

Resist cold 10, electricity 10

Immune undead traits

Fort +3 (+5 vs. poison), **Ref** +19, **Will** +8

Weaknesses vampire weaknesses

Spd 30 ft., climb 20 ft.

Melee *+1 ghost touch keen dagger* +18/+13 (1d4+7/17–20 plus poison) and snakes +12 (1d4+6 plus poison and energy drain)

Ranged *+1 thundering composite shortbow* +18/+13 (1d6+3/x3 plus poison)

Base Atk +9; **Grp** +15

Atk Options Point Blank Shot, Precise Shot, sneak attack +3d6

Special Atks blood drain, children of the night, create spawn, death attack (DC 17), dominate (DC 19), petrifying gaze (DC 21)

Assassin Spells Known (CL 5th):

2nd (3/day)—*cat's grace, invisibility, nondetection* (DC 14)

1st (4/day)—*disguise self, ghost sound* (DC 13), *obscuring mist, true strike*

Abilities Str 22, Dex 26, Con —, Int 14, Wis 15, Cha 19

SQ alternate form, gaseous form, spider climb, turn resistance +4

Feats Ability Focus (petrifying gaze), Alertness[B], Combat Reflexes[B], Dodge[B], Improved Initiative[B], Lightning Reflexes[B], Point Blank Shot, Precise Shot, Weapon Finesse

Skills Bluff +23, Diplomacy +8, Disguise +15 (+17 acting), Hide +30, Intimidate +6, Listen +23, Move Silently +30, Search +10, Sense Motive +20, Spot +23

Possessions *Gravebite (+1 ghost touch keen dagger), +3 mithral chain shirt, +2 buckler, Thunderbolt (+1 thundering composite short bow* [Str +3]) with 40 arrows, 12 doses of medusa snake venom (Fort DC 15, 1d6 Str/2d6 Str)

Tactics: Unless directed otherwise by Artor, Medechai stays in the Ghost Cage, watching for intruders on both the Ethereal and Material Plane. If confronted in her lair, Medechai does not immediately attack. She prefers to allow the PCs to investigate and (hopefully) move on before attacking at a time of weakness.

Development: If the PCs destroy Artor Morlin before they encounter Medechai, she is freed from her enslavement. Initially, this does not change her behavior. She continues to hide in the Fireplace Level on the Ethereal Plane and defend it against outsiders. Eventually, hunger forces her to leave through the portal in area **F9A**. At that point, she tries to claim the Fireplace Level as her lair.

G4. Bloodfire's Coals (EL 11)

A steaming pile of coal chunks more than twenty feet high looms here. The ruddy light of burning embers gleams from within the pile.

This pile of coal serves as a food source for Artor's steed. The coals burn very slowly on the Ethereal Plane, so Artor rarely needs to replenish the stack.

Creature: Artor's steed is Bloodfire, a cauchemar nightmare. The Baron of Blood acquired Bloodfire long ago in trade with a night hag, and the cauchemar now willingly serves the vampire lord. When the nightmare's services as a steed are not needed, it roams the Ghost Cage, watching for intruders.

Bloodfire, Cauchemar Nightmare: hp 172; *Monster Manual* 194.

G5. Lair of the Blood Baron (EL 12 and EL 21)

A gargantuan mass of webs fills this region, shaped roughly like a sloping triangle in the corner of a rectangular room. The webs extend into the "solid" region of the adjacent plane, suggesting they are affixed to some invisible but solid object. Amidst the web are four cocoons, each roughly the size and shape of a man, as well as at least a half dozen chests and coffers, ranging from the ornate to the mundane. Suspended in the center of the web is an engraved black marble sarcophagus. The sarcophagus lid is carved to resemble a lean, chiseled, male warrior with well-oiled hair in a thick braid and a grim, almost sunken, countenance. The figure is clad in a chain shirt and clasps a two-bladed sword to his breast.

Artor Morlin's primary coffin lies within the mass of webs that makes up the phase spiders' lair.

Creatures: Three advanced 14-HD phase spiders lurk within the web. One phase spider always sits atop the sarcophagus, guarding it against interlopers.

Depending on how events have played out, the PCs may or may not find Artor Morlin here. If Fhang survived the previous adventure, Artor instructs it to assume the

guise of Delinth Oberlin, seneschal of the Gost family and Artor's previous identity. In that case, Fhang is off in the Gost Villa, while Artor returns here to his primary lair. On the other hand, if Fhang perished at the end of "Dungeon of the Crypt," Artor continues to play the role of Delinth Oberlin himself, and makes his lair in area **V8**. In that case, he continues to use this coffin as a fall back position. If the PCs have driven him from the Gost Villa, he returns here to make his final stand.

Artor Morlin resembles a human of obvious Tethyrian heritage. This lean, chiseled warrior has skin of dusky hue, well-oiled black hair in a thick braid hanging down his back, and a grim, almost sunken countenance. His eyes gleam with the feral cunning of a natural-born warrior who has survived innumerable fights, inevitably bathed in the blood of his foes at the end of every one.

At the present time, Artor's vampiric servitors include Arrick Kaarvol, Fhang of the Unseen (see "Dungeon of the Crypt"), **Rorrina, daul of Tuvala of Clan Stoneshaft**, (CE female vampire [augmented shield dwarf] cleric 10 [Abbathor]), of Melairrin (an abandoned shield dwarf hold in the Sword Mountains), and Medechai. Artor is currently employed as the aging seneschal of the Gost family private militia, a role he has played for decades. "Delinth Oberlin" enjoys the complete trust of the Gost family.

Artor is a cautious, patient strategist and master tactician. He sees the City of Splendors as his personal hunting grounds, a necessary prerequisite to his continued existence. Likewise, Waterdeep's vampire lord is relentless in his efforts to destroy rival vampires, even when they pose no apparent risk to his current position.

Artor is a pragmatist who enjoys the long years and potent abilities his current form accords him. He has no interest in prolonging fights he cannot win, or in antagonizing potential foes whose defeat is not worth the cost. He never wants to lose, and he avoids putting himself in a situation where his victory is in the slightest doubt. For example, he has spent years and a small fortune investigating variant forms of vampirism, simply to understand his own weaknesses. Yet, when battle is finally joined on his terms, the Baron of Blood revels in the blood-drenched chaos of battle.

Artor Morlin **CR 21**

Male vampire Tethyrian human fighter 13/blackguard 3/master vampire 3

LE Medium undead (augmented humanoid)

Monster Manual 250, *Libris Mortis* 55

Init +8; **Senses** darkvision 60 ft.; Spot +14, Listen +14

Aura despair (10 ft., –2 on saves)

Languages Alzhedo, Common, Chondathan

AC 29, touch 14, flat-footed 25; Dodge, Mobility

hp 129 (19 HD); fast healing 5; **DR** 10/silver and magic

Resist cold 10, electricity 10

Immune undead traits

Fort +18, **Ref** +16, **Will** +13

Weaknesses vampire weakness

Spd 30 ft., climb 20 ft.

Melee +2 *vampiric two-bladed sword* +25/+20/+15/+10 (1d8+11/19–20 plus poison and vampiric) and +2 *vampiric two-bladed sword* +25/+20/+15 (1d8+7/19–20 plus poison and vampiric) or +2 *vampiric two-bladed sword* +27/+22/+17/+12 (1d8+14/19–20 plus poison and vampiric) or slam +24 (1d6+7 plus energy drain)

Base Atk +17; **Grp** +24

Atk Options Combat Expertise, Improved Sunder, Power Attack, Spring Attack, Whirlwind Attack
Special Atk blood drain, children of the night, create spawn, dominate (DC 27), rebuke undead 7/day (+6, 2d6+7, 1st)
Blackguard Spells Prepared (CL 5th):
2nd—*eagle's splendor*
1st—*corrupt weapon* (2)
Spell-Like Abilities (CL 3rd):
At will—*detect good*

Abilities Str 24, Dex 18, Con —, Int 14, Wis 12, Cha 22
SQ alternate form, enhanced spawn, gaseous form, master's chosen, spider climb, turn resistance +4 (+1 for each spawn within 30 ft.)

Feats Alertness[B], Ability Focus (dominate), Combat Expertise, Combat Reflexes[B], Dodge[B], Endure Sunlight, Exotic Weapon Proficiency (two-bladed sword)[B], Greater Two-Weapon Fighting, Improved Domination, Improved Initiative[B], Improved Sunder[B], Improved Two-Weapon Fighting, Lightning Reflexes[B], Mobility[B], Power Attack[B], Spring Attack, Two-Weapon Fighting[B], Weapon Focus (two-bladed sword)[B], Weapon Specialization (two-bladed sword)[B], Whirlwind Attack
Skills Bluff +19, Climb +15, Concentration +9, Diplomacy +28, Disguise +10 (+12 acting), Gather Information +12, Hide +24, Intimidate +26, Jump +15, Knowledge (history) +6, Knowledge (local) +7, Knowledge (religion) +4, Listen +14, Move Silently +17, Search +10, Sense Motive +14, Spot +14, Tumble +6
Possessions *Shoonfangs (+2 vampiric/+2 vampiric two-bladed sword), Artor's Armament (+5 mithral chain shirt), belt of giant strength +4, bowl of blood* (not carried, see sidebar), *cloak of etherealness*, 10 doses of purple worm poison (Fort DC 24, 1d6 Str/2d6 Str), large assortment of keys

Enhanced Spawn (Su): Any vampire or vampire spawn created by Artor gains a +2 enhancement bonus to its Str and Dex scores. If Artor is destroyed or releases the spawn from service, the spawn loses this bonus.
Master's Chosen (Su): Artor can designate a single vampire or vampire spawn that he created with his create spawn ability as his chosen. Doing this requires a 1-hour ritual during which the chosen must consume a small portion of the master's flesh. The chosen gains a +6 enhancement bonus to its Strength and Dexterity scores. Artor can remove this designation as a standard action. If Artor is destroyed or releases the chosen from service, the chosen loses this bonus.

New Magic Item

Bowl of Blood: This small container is usually fashioned from a massive bloodstone gem. It is about 6 inches in diameter, half that deep, and relatively fragile. Thrice per day, upon command, the bowl fills with blood. While in the bowl, blood does not congeal and can be used as a material component, writing ink, medical supply, stirge lure, or hurled at opponents to blind them temporarily in a fight, etc.

Most (80%) *bowls of blood* produce human blood. Others produce elf, gnome, or dragon blood. All bowls fill 50 times and then vanish.

Faint conjuration; CL 5th; Craft Wondrous Item, *create food and water*; Price 8,000 gp; Weight 2 pounds.

New Feats

Endure Sunlight: Artor can resist the dangerous effects of sunlight for 5 rounds. After this time, he is affected as normal for a vampire.

This feat first appeared in *Libris Mortis*.

Improved Domination
The creature can dominate all manner of monsters.

Prerequisites: Cha 21, Intimidate 18 ranks, dominate person supernatural ability.

Benefit: Your dominate ability applies to creatures of any type.

Advanced Phase Spiders (3) CR 9

N Huge magical beast
Monster Manual 207
Init +7; **Senses** darkvision 60 ft., low-light vision; Spot +9, Listen +1

AC 17, touch 11, flat-footed 14
hp 147 (14 HD)
Fort +14, **Ref** +12, **Will** +7
Spd 40 ft., climb 20 ft.
Melee bite +21 (2d6+12 plus poison)
Space 15 ft. **Reach** 10 ft.
Base Atk +14; **Grp** +30

Abilities Str 26, Dex 16, Con 20, Int 7, Wis 13, Cha 10
SQ ethereal jaunt
Feats Ability Focus (poison), Improved Initiative, Improved Natural Attack (bite), Iron Will, Weapon Focus (bite)
Skills Climb +11, Move Silently +12, Spot +9
Poison (Ex): Injury, Fortitude DC 24, initial and secondary damage 1d8 Constitution. The save DC is Constitution based.

Tactics: Artor does not wait passively for the PCs to attack but attempts to monitor their progress as much as possible. If he observes the PCs at a weak moment, Artor directs his servitors to attack, but refrains from joining the fray unless victory is all but certain.

Artor employs his *cloak of etherealness* for brief forays to the Ghost Cage; he uses the portal in **F9A** for longer sojourns, includ-

ing times he plans to remain in his coffin on the Ethereal Plane. Artor can return from the Ethereal Plane to the Material Plane by using the portal or his cloak.

If forced to make a stand here, Artor waits inside the sarcophagus, closely observing the PCs' fight with the phase spiders. Once he enters the fray, he fights from within the webs, using his spider climb ability to full effect. If pressed, the Baron of Blood flees in gaseous form (quickly vanishing into the mists of the Ethereal Plane). If possible, Artor makes his way to the Gost Villa, forcing the PCs to battle the defenders of House Gost to get to him a second time.

If utterly defeated, and not currently bound by the Hunt of Malar (meaning that Dhusarra is dead and the PCs have not been drawn in to the hunt, see "Blood of Malar" and "Dungeon of the Crypt") Artor flees to the catacombs of old Morlin Castle through his emergency escape portal in area **F9B**.

Treasure: The ornate sarcophagus is made of carved marble and is worth 20,000 gp to a collector. The lid of the sarcophagus cannot be removed. The only means of accessing the interior of the sarcophagus is via a small hole in the pommel of the carved two-bladed sword.

Artor's *bowl of blood* sits inside the sarcophagus in a small cavity, positioned so as to drip blood into the vampire's mouth upon command.

The four cocoons hold the corpses of Waterdhavian citizens killed late at night in the dark alleys of Dock Ward by hunting phase spiders and brought back here to serve as breeding husks. All four of the husks have been implanted with thousands of phase spider eggs. Destroying a husk also destroys the eggs. The identities of the corpses are unimportant, unless you wish to clear up the random, mysterious disappearance of an NPC from the early days of your current campaign. If so, then that corpse might still possess some form of treasure, such as a signet ring, which could allow the PCs to identify it.

The seven chests and coffers buried in the web hold treasures that Artor has collected over the years, as well as treasures found in the Ethereal Plane by Artor's servitors (placed there by spells such as *Leomund's secret chest*) and brought back here. Artor had to abandon most of his hoard when he fled the Company of Crazed Venturers, so these treasures have largely been accumulated over the past several decades.

Chest #1: Fashioned of ebony, with mithral corner fittings, nails, and hardware and silver filigreed draconic runes inscribed on the lid, this chest is worth at least 7,500 gp. It was built at the direction of Maaril the Dragon Mage, who sent it to the Ethereal Plane using a *Leomund's secret chest* spell, and was then stolen by Artor's minions. The chest contains one of two copies in existence of the *Workbook of Lhoril Delhiirnyn* (the other lies within the Dragon Tower of Maaril [$30]). In addition to Lhoril's extensive spell research notes (focused on the summoning and control of demons from the Abyss), the *Workbook* contains a complete accounting of the treasures she observed in Ahghairon's Tower (C79) just before the wards were laid about it after the great mage's death in the Year of the Dusty Throne (1256 DR). This collection of lore is worth 10,000 gp to the right collector.

Chest #2: This large steel strongbox has four steel rings attached to its lid, so that it can be lifted with two stout carry poles. The strongbox contains 300 100-gp trade-bars, each marked on the bottom with the device of the Six Coffers Market Priakos. The trade-bars were stolen less than a month ago from the merchant Maftan of Waterdeep, who now desperately seeks additional funds to cover his debts. The strongbox is locked with a strong lock and requires a DC 40 Open Lock check (DC 40) to bypass. Artor has the key.

Chest #3: Fashioned of weirwood, with platinum corner fittings and nails, this chest is worth at least 5,000 gp. A moon elf wizard of Aelinthaldaar constructed it long ago, and then sent it to the Ethereal Plane using an older variant of a *Leomund's secret chest* spell. The chest contains an elven lore-gem known as a *kiira Mag*, tucked inside the left boot of a pair of *boots of elvenkind*. A holy symbol of Sehanine Moonbow is tucked inside the right boot. The *kiira* contains the spells *analyze dweomer*, *contact other plane*, *moment of prescience*, *scrying*, and *vision*, and functions just like a wizard's spellbook. The *kiira* is worth 9,000 gp, while the holy symbol is worth 200 gp for its artistry and antiquity.

Chest #4: This small coffer is constructed of teak, with silver corner fittings, nails, and hardware. It bears the device of House Sultlue, one of Waterdeep's noble families. Inside it holds twin bejeweled *daggers of venom*, each worth 10,000 gp due to the additional ornamentation. Both daggers bear the fangs-bared flying snake symbol of Sseth, god of the yuan-ti. The coffer also holds a thin tome bound in serpentskin with pages made of gilded vellum. The book describes depraved religious rituals of the yuan-ti (treat as a *vacuous grimoire*). Artor's minions stole this coffer from a Calishite merchant who had been contracted to ship the coffer from Lushpool to Waterdeep just hours before he was to meet with a representative of House Sultlue.

Chest #5: This long, thin case is made of sandalwood and locked by a simple golden clasp. The case bears the suit-of-armor device of House Silmerhelve. Inside it contains a matched set of dueling blades, a *rapier of puncturing*, and a *luck blade* (with 0 wishes remaining). Fhang acquired this set a few years ago in a duel after killing a nettlesome young rake of House Silmerhelve while in the guise of one his rivals.

Chest #6: This simple wooden chest is unlocked and devoid of ornamentation. It contains a mix of coins of varying ages and mintages. The total value of the coins contained within the chest is 5,173 gp.

Chest #7: This large steel chest is held shut with thick straps made of woven strips of blue dragon hide. Inside it holds a neatly stored and disassembled suit of armor. This suit of *+1 fire resistance red dragonhide full plate* was once worn by a helmed horror constructed by the court mages of the Shoon Imperium.

Ad-hoc Experience Award: Arrick and Medechai and hence Arrick's vampire spawn are all part of the threat encompassed by Artor Morlin. Therefore, if the PCs defeat Artor, they should not get experience for any of the above-listed servitors (if you already awarded them experience, simply deduct that total from the amount you give them for defeating Artor himself). However, if the PCs

manage to drive Artor out of Waterdeep and destroy his servitors, they should receive appropriate experience for Arrick and Medechai (but not Arrick's vampire spawn) and a 7,500 XP story award for ridding the City of Splendors of Waterdeep's resident vampire lord.

G6. Gundwynd Haunt (EL varies)

Although no walls confine them here, several forlorn-looking humanoids huddle inside the bars of a shadowy cage on the Material Plane.

Creatures: When not wandering the "halls" of the Ghost Cage or possessing interlopers in the Fireplace Level, the Gundwynd Ghosts usually congregate at the location where they starved to death (**F13C**). If any of the ghosts are destroyed, they rejuvenate here after 2d4 days.

Gundwynd Ghosts: See area **F8**.

Beyond the Ghost Cage

The Ethereal Plane beyond the Ghost Cage is beyond the scope of this adventure. Characters who explore this region, including those employing a *plane shift* spell and those passing through one of the Ghost Cage exits (**G2**), might encounter ethereal filchers and ethereal marauders (detailed in the *Monster Manual*) who prey on the inhabitants of the City of Splendors.

One possible destination for PCs who wander beyond the Ghost Cage might be to see what lies beyond Blackstaff's Visage (**F10**). Unfortunately for the PCs, all they can deduce is that the stairs lead up to the basement of a villa in North Ward. A DC 15 Knowledge (local) check reveals that the villa belongs to House Gost. It is not possible to enter the villa via the Ethereal Plane, however, as the walls have been lined with gorgon's blood specifically to prevent this tactic.

GOST VILLA BASEMENT

Gost Villa (N57) sits at the northwest corner of Geltoon Street and Golden Serpent Street. The villa includes a four-story mansion, a walled courtyard enclosing a peaceful arbor, and a three-story gatehouse, which houses many of the house guards as well as the stables.

Only the basement of the main mansion is detailed, as the PCs are unlikely to explore the rest of the villa as a "dungeon." If the PCs decide to visit the aboveground levels of the Gost villa, describe it as a typical manse of a wealthy, prominent, Waterdhavian merchant family. The PCs are likely to be turned away if they do not have real business with House Gost's mercantile interests (armor-making, caravan-mastering, and trading), unless they make a very compelling case. (Lord Djarrus is so blinded by Artor's domination that almost any story that contradicts his existing worldview is likely to be rejected out of hand.)

The stonework of the basement is of relatively recent construction, for the original villa was rebuilt on this site less than two centuries ago. Most rooms have loose flagstone floors. Ceiling height in the basement ranges from 8 to 10 feet, depending on where one stands beneath the barrel vaults that form the roof.

The villa's ceilings, walls, and floors (in the basement and the villa above) are sealed with a light plaster mixed with gorgon's blood, which prevents ethereal travelers from entering the Ethereal region coterminous with the villa.

The Gost Villa basement is largely uninhabited. The only regular visitors are the occasional cook, members of the Gost house militia, and Artor Morlin (or Fhang), in his (or its) guise as "Delinth Oberlin."

The easiest way for the PCs to reach the Gost Villa basement is by means of the secret door connecting **F10** to **V1**, either through their own volition or because they allowed their bodies to be possessed by the Gundwynd ghosts, who have now entered the basement to seek their revenge against the scions of House Gost. In either case, the PCs are likely to trigger a villa-wide alarm, prompting the house militia to respond under the command of either Fhang or Artor Morlin under the guise of "Delinth Oberlin."

Typical Oak and Iron Door: 2 in. thick; Hardness 5; hp 20; Break DC 28, Open Lock (when appropriate) DC 30.

Typical Unworked Stone Wall: 5 ft. thick; Hardness 8; hp 900; Break DC 65; Climb DC 20.

V1. Gost Keg Cellar (EL variable)

This low, roughly square chamber is filled with great casks of ale.

There is a secret door beneath the southeasternmost cask, which is empty. Passage through the secret door is likely to alert the household (see the Trap below).

Creatures: There is a 5% chance of encountering a **servant of House Gost** (N human commoner 1) in this room, filling a pitcher of ale.

If the *stone of alarm* is triggered, 2 units of the house militia respond, one by the staircase in **V4** and one by the staircase in **V6**. Lord Djarrus Gost leads the house militia personally. He is a worried-looking man of slender build and fair skin. He wears his blond hair short and favors the latest Waterdhavian fashions. He speaks with the sincere belief that he can change the world for the better.

Although just thirty-two years of age, Lord Djarrus has been running his family's affairs for nearly seven years, five as heir and acting lord and two as family patriarch. Since the death of his father, Lord Bhaedulph, who finally passed away after many years of infirmity due to the sweet sickness (diabetes), Lord Djarrus has quietly given a significant fraction of his family's income to the Church of Lathander.

Lord Djarrus is firmly convinced that vampires, or "the blood lords of the night," have infiltrated many cities in the Lords' Alliance, and he has long employed several sages to track down hints of vampiric activity in communities across the North. The young lord gives the fruits of this research to his half-sister, Corinna Lathankin, a legendary vampire hunter and member of the Order of the Aster. Djarrus is wholly unaware that his trusted seneschal "Delinth Oberlin" is in fact a guise of the vampire lord of Waterdeep, Artor Morlin, or that his obsession with the blood-sucking undead is the result of Artor's domination.

If Artor's domination of Djarrus is lifted, the young lord is slow to comprehend what has occurred, so long has he been under Artor's influence. If conclusive proof of "Delinth's" perfidy is revealed to him, Djarrus's fury is initially unmatched. However, once that initial anger is spent, Djarrus might well embrace the cause that Artor forcibly instilled in him, or he might revert to the self-indulgent, slightly spoiled lordling he might have otherwise been.

Djarrus Gost
CR 10
Male Illuskan human aristocrat 11
NG Medium humanoid
Init +0; **Senses** Spot –1, Listen –1
Languages Chondathan, Common, Illuskan

AC 15, touch 10, flat-footed 15
hp 49 (11 HD)
Fort +5, **Ref** +5, **Will** +6

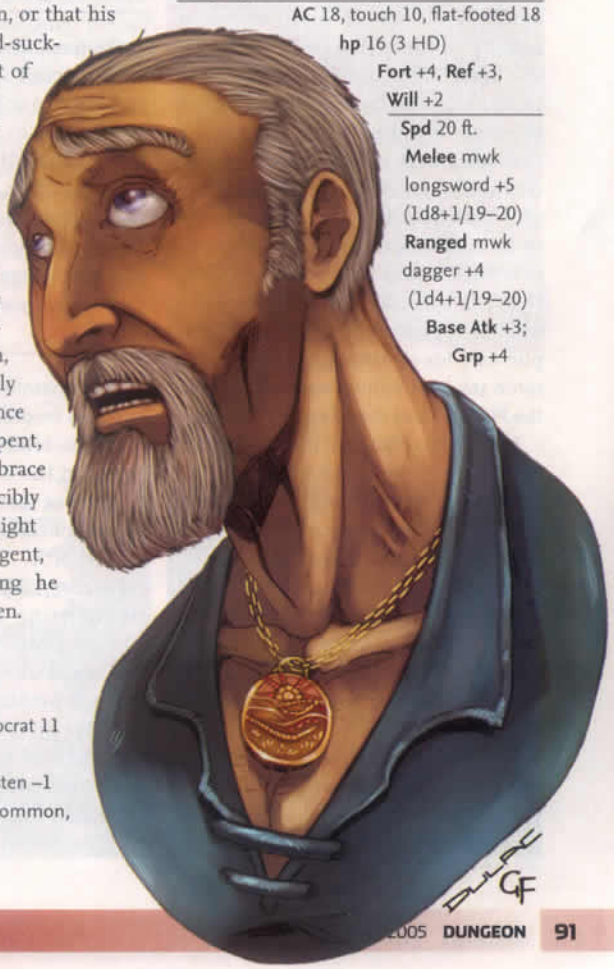
Spd 30 ft.
Melee *+1 keen rapier* +9/+4 (1d6+1/15–20) or *+1 keen rapier* +7/+2 (1d6+1/15–20) and *+1 short sword* +7 (1d6+1/19–20)
Base Atk +8; **Grp** +8

Abilities Str 11, Dex 10, Con 10, Int 12, Wis 9, Cha 15
Feats Great Fortitude, Lightning Reflexes, Negotiator, Two-Weapon Fighting
Skills Appraise +15, Bluff +16, Disguise +2 (+4 acting), Diplomacy +24, Gather Information +18, Intimidate +4, Knowledge (local) +10, Knowledge (nobility and royalty) +6, Sense Motive +15
Possessions *+1 keen rapier, +1 short sword, +1 chain shirt, cloak of Charisma +2*

House Militia (2 groups of 5) **CR 2**
Human warrior 3
N Medium humanoid
Init +4; **Senses** Spot –1, Listen –1
Languages Chondathan, Common

AC 18, touch 10, flat-footed 18
hp 16 (3 HD)
Fort +4, **Ref** +3, **Will** +2

Spd 20 ft.
Melee mwk longsword +5 (1d8+1/19–20)
Ranged mwk dagger +4 (1d4+1/19–20)
Base Atk +3; **Grp** +4



Abilities Str 13, Dex 11, Con 12, Int 10, Wis 9, Cha 8
Feats Improved Initiative, Iron Will, Lightning Reflexes
Skills Climb +7, Intimidate +6, Swim –4
Possessions masterwork dagger, masterwork half-plate, masterwork longsword, masterwork light crossbow, masterwork light steel shield

Tactics: Once Djarrus arrives, he demands the immediate surrender of the PCs. If they refuse to come peaceably, he orders his guardsmen to expel or capture them by force. If combat breaks out and it becomes clear that his guards are no match for the PCs, he retreats to the main level of his villa and sends for the city guard.

Both the Gundwynd ghosts and the vampires have good reason to start a fight; the Gundwynd ghosts hope to kill members of House Gost, while the vampires wish to implicate the PCs in an unjustified, brazen assault on a respected family of the Waterdhavian merchant nobility. Of course, the challenge for the PCs in such a scenario is to prevail while inflicting as little harm on the defenders of House Gost as possible.

Development: If Djarrus and his guard detail are slain, the vampire in the guise of Delinth Oberlin dispatches a message to the city guard demanding retribution for his slain lord. Needless to say, Djarrus's half-sister Corinna Lathankin will not be pleased. Meanwhile the vampire uses his remaining guardsmen (20 more 3rd-level human warriors) to hold the PCs off until the city guard arrives.

Potential combat with the city guard is beyond the scope of this adventure, but suffice to say that even high-level PCs will be over their heads trying to take on the Lords of Waterdeep in their own city.

Trap: The flagstone over the secret trapdoor is actually a *stone of alarm* set to trigger if the command word, "Wormwrithings," is not stated.

Ad-Hoc Experience Award: Award the PCs 2,500 XP for removing Artor's dominance of Djarrus and/or for identifying Artor/Djarrus as the source of Corinna's information about vampires in Waterdeep and the North.

V2. Wine Cellar

Shelves filled with aged wine dominate this low, roughly square chamber.

Creature: There is a 5% chance of encountering a servant of House Gost in this room, retrieving a bottle of wine.

V3. Storage Cellar

This long, low, rectangular chamber is piled high with old furniture and rolled-up rugs.

Creature: There is a 5% chance of encountering a servant of House Gost in this room, on his way to or from areas **V1** or **V2**.

V4. Storage Cellar

This low, roughly square chamber is largely empty, although a few crates and coffins are stacked along the walls.

Creature: There is a 5% chance of encountering a servant of House Gost in this room, on her way to or from areas **V1** or **V2**.

V5. Library

The walls of this room are covered with fine wood paneling, and the floor is covered with a large Tashalan tapestry. Bookshelves line the walls, filled with all manner of tomes.

This chamber is used to house the business records of House Gost as well as various tomes dealing with vampires. Access to the library provides a +1 circumstance bonus to all Knowledge checks concerning the City of Splendors or the North.

Creature: There is a 5% chance of encountering Lord Djarrus Gost or "Delinth Oberlin" in this chamber, intent on some research project or the other.

Development: A DC 25 Search check finds the private diary of Lord Harthar Gost, hidden within an unrelated volume. It includes, among other Gost family secrets, a discussion of the Fireplace Level's existence and gives some details about the Gost portal network in the course of several travel accounts. This diary is worth at least 1,000 gp, given the value of knowledge about the workings of largely unknown portal networks.

V6. Storage Cellar

This long, low, rectangular chamber is piled high with chests, crates, and coffers.

The secret door at the southern end of the east wall is well hidden, requiring a DC 35 Search check to find. The door is locked, requiring a DC 40 Open Locks check to pick. Artor (or Fhang) has the only key. It is possible to bypass this door in gaseous form via a narrow crack between the door and the floor.

V7. Antechamber

This short, narrow chamber appears to be empty, save for a trio of paintings hung along the east wall. The paintings depict the ruins of a fallen city that sprawls across an area of plains. In each painting, a dark, shadowy figure with feral, red eyes stands above the ruins, watching and waiting.

Treasure: Artor commissioned these paintings centuries ago, and he keeps them here to remind himself of the fate of his enemies. The three paintings depict some of the ruins of Shoonach, including a region of barracks, smithies, and arenas (Iltakar), a region of opulent tombs, shrines, sepulchers, and temples (Debukher), and region of temples, palaces, and government buildings atop a hill (Imperial Mount of Shoonach). Each painting is worth 5,000 gp individually. As a set, they are worth 20,000 gp.

V8. Chamber of the Sarcophagus (EL 14 or 21)

This short, narrow chamber contains an ornate black marble sarcophagus. The sarcophagus lid is carved to resemble a lean, chiseled male warrior with well-oiled hair in a thick braid and a grim, almost sunken, countenance. The carved figure is clad in a chain shirt and clasps a two-bladed sword to his breast.

Artor Morlin's secondary coffin lies here, in the basement of the Gost villa.

Creature: Artor retreats in secret to this coffin whenever "Delinth Oberlin" is supposedly resting in his chamber in the villa above. If you are playing "The Fireplace Level" as a stand alone adventure, Artor is likely to be found here, or elsewhere in the manor in the guise of Delinth Oberlin.

However, if you are playing the Vampires of Waterdeep trilogy, then Artor's presence or lack thereof becomes a tactical decision not governed by chance. If Fhang has survived the Dungeon of the Crypt, then Fhang waits here while Artor Morlin withdraws to the Ghost Cage. If Fhang has not survived, then Artor remains in Gost Villa in his guise as family seneschal and does not return to the Ghost Cage unless forced to return to one of his coffins and his coffin here has been destroyed.

Artor Morlin: hp 129; (see page 84).

Fhang: hp 97; (see page 85 of DUNGEON #127).

Treasure: The ornate sarcophagus, a twin of the one found in the Ghost Cage, is made of carved marble and is worth 20,000 gp to a collector. The lid of the sarcophagus cannot be removed. The only means of accessing the interior of the sarcophagus is via a small hole in the pommel of the carved two-bladed sword.

Development: If the PCs destroy Artor Morlin while Fhang still survives, the vampire doppelganger is freed from its imprisonment. In that case, Fhang retains the identity of Delinth Oberlin as long as possible. If the PCs or Djarrus discover its vampiric nature, however, it flees at once. Eventually, it hopes to remain in Waterdeep and challenge its master Hlaavin for control of the Unseen.

CONCLUDING THE ADVENTURE

If the PCs succeed, the adventure ends with Artor Morlin either destroyed or driven from the City of Splendors. If Artor fled through the Morlin Catacombs Portal (**F9B**), the PCs may want to track him down and explore the ancient catacombs of Morlin Castle.

If Dhusarra survives and Artor is destroyed, she is now free to move between Waterdeep, Undermountain, and the rest of the world, and she is one large step closer to establishing herself as vampire lord of Waterdeep.

In any event, with Artor Morlin dethroned, Waterdeep is sure to see an upswing in vampire activity as blood lords of the night migrate to the newly reopened hunting grounds. Corinna might well ask the PCs to become successors to the Foes of the Fang, dedicating themselves to the destruction of vampires active in Waterdeep and the North.

Eric L. Boyd soaks up every bit of Realmslore he can get his hands on. This fascination with all things Faerûnian has led him down the dark and treacherous path of freelance game design. Eric's most recent foray to the FORGOTTEN REALMS *led him to the City of Splendors. His previous efforts for* DUNGEON *include "Sleep of Ages" (#69) and "Eye of Myrkul" (#73).*

scaling the adventure

"The Fireplace Level" is designed for a group of four 14th-level characters, but with a little work it can be adapted for use by 12th–13th-level characters or 15th–16th-level characters. Simply adjust all NPC character levels up or down as appropriate by a number equal to that which the average party level of your group deviates from 14. Don't forget to modify the amount of treasure found in the adventure appropriately. Specific changes to the adventure include:

12th–13th-level parties: Reduce the number of portal drakes in area **F2** to one. Replace the blood fiend in area **F4** with an ice devil. Reduce the Blood of Ghaunadaur by 3–5 Hit Dice and remove one of the phase spiders from area **G5**.

15th–16th-level parties: Add a third portal drake to area **F2**. Add a second Blood of Ghaundaur to area **F5**. Add another vampire mind flayer and two more ghosts to area **F8**. Add two more phase spiders to area **G5**, and advance the nightmare in area **G4** by 2–4 Hit Dice.

THE PORTENT BY PETER BERGTING

I LOVE SHOPPING FOR MY OWN GROCERIES. MAKES ME FEEL SO...
NORMAL!
I HEARD THAT THE VEGETABLES ARE MAGICALLY MANIPULATED. IT'S ALL THE RAGE NOW.
OH YEAH! NEAT!
GOOP
DON'T PICK ME! I'M TOO YOUNG TOO DIE!
LEAVE HIM ALONE!
WAAH!!!
WHAT HAS HE DONE TO YOU?
HELP!
$.25
THAT'S IT!
I'M NOT SHOPPING THERE EVER AGAIN!
HELP ME! HELP MEEEEE!!!

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WINGING IT

PART 1: THE BASICS

BY MONTE COOK
BY KYLE HUNTER

Over the years, I've heard a lot of DMs talk about running games. Some believe that a key to good DMing is "winging it," which I agree with. However, some take the idea too far. In fact, these DMs contend that a good DM *doesn't* prepare, he just makes it up as he goes along. "I come up with a couple of ideas in the car ride to the game and go with that," they say. Or, "I throw out some situation at the beginning of the session, let the players discuss what the solution is, and then pick one of the best solutions that they come up with and make that the right one." The worst part of this belief is that it implies that people who prepare are somehow lesser DMs.

These are not beliefs I share. In fact, I think that the attitude is laziness bred by talent and experience. That is to say, I'm sure that these DMs are good at what they do, but that they'd be far better if they put some work into the games ahead of time. Even the most creative novelist you can name is helped by an outline developed ahead of time (or by extensive revisions after the first draft—DMs don't have that luxury).

Not only would their game be even better with a little more forethought, but the players would gain greater rewards as well. Have you ever been a part of a contest where you found out at the end that everyone gets a prize just for participating? That's nice, but there's no feeling of accomplishment for doing well in such a contest. Similarly, if the PCs find out that you didn't know who the murderer in the mystery adventure you were running was, and you just let their actions and ideas dictate the final outcome, they're not going to feel very proud of themselves for apprehending the murderer. It reminds me of an episode of the *Twilight Zone* in which a gangster dies and finds himself in

an afterlife where everything goes his way—he wins every time he goes gambling, he succeeds at every crime he tries to pull off, and so on. He believes he's in Heaven, but by the end of the episode he realizes that he's in Hell. With no feeling of actual accomplishment, players grow disinterested fast.

That said, even the best-prepared DM can't plan for every contingency. There are times when every DM has to wing it.

ROLEPLAYING

Sometimes, you just can't find time in the week to prepare for the game the way you wished. Sometimes the players decide to go off in a direction you never predicted. In these cases, you have to make up the events of the game, the NPCs involved, and the locales in which they take place, all on the fly. And most importantly, you have to make the players believe that everything is fine and you are perfectly prepared.

In other words, you have to roleplay, and the character you are going to pretend to be is a well-prepared DM.

So first and foremost, don't panic. This isn't going to be as hard as you might think. Even though you might not realize it, you've got some time. One thing about the typical RPG session is that there's a fair bit of "DM downtime." If you add up all the moments where everyone is assembling and pulling out their sheets (and chitchatting about the latest movie or last night's baseball game), players are discussing what to do amongst themselves, or when the spellcasters are looking for the right spells to prepare, and so on, you've actually got a fair amount of time for on-the-day planning.

Use this time to figure out what you're going to do (we'll start discussing how in a minute). But don't make it look like that's what you're doing. Refer to the notes from last week's game as if they were the notes to this week's. Flip through a rulebook as if you're checking on something ahead of time. Jot down a few notes on a piece of paper, but do so as if it was just a couple of last minute details, not the outline for the whole session's events.

It is, after all, a roleplaying game. And there's no rule in any book that says the DM has to be honest with the players.

THEY ZIG WHEN YOU THOUGHT THEY WOULD ZAG

There are basically two different scenarios in which you have to wing it. The first is when the PCs are doing what you expected, but not in the way in which you expected. For example, in a campaign I was running in my Ptolus setting a few years back, the PCs were hunting dark elves. I figured that it would be a series of adventures akin to some of my old favorites—the D series of adventures from first edition D&D. I prepared all sorts of interesting subterranean encounters and cool dark elf strongholds. What I wasn't expecting, however, was that the players would decide that the best way to go after the dark elves was to raise an army of angry elves and hired mercenaries. I had the encounters all ready, but I suddenly had to cope with an army of around 150 NPCs coming with the PCs.

First off, I had to come up with ways to handle the PCs' desire to raise an army. The easy thing to do would have been to make it difficult or impossible. I could have made it so that the mercenaries wanted too much pay, or that no one wanted to go down into the underworld, or just have had a wise and respected NPC tell the PCs that a large assault like they were planning wouldn't work, and that a small strike force (like the PCs) would be far more efficient. And no one would blame a DM for taking that route. Sometimes, indeed, the DM has to say no. In this situation, however, I thought that would be the wrong solution. The PCs would feel stifled and rejected. Instead, I whipped out the *DMG* and saw how much a mercenary hireling wants per day, and upped the price due to the dangerous duty asked of him, but not so much that it was out of reach of the PCs' pocketbooks. Even as I flipped to the right page, I thought about the people in Ptolus that the PCs knew and who would help them with this and who wouldn't.

In truth, once I got into "yes" mode instead of "no" mode, and just went with the flow, it was easy. The PCs went to the proper hiring halls and talked with some mercenary captains. I knew some Sense Motive checks and divination magic would help the PCs determine which ones to use, so I intentionally threw in some bad sorts for them to weed out, which they did. I had remembered that they had made some allies among the dwarves that lived below the city, so when they thought to approach them, I was already one step ahead of them and had determined that with some good Diplomacy checks and a lucrative offer, they'd get a couple units of dwarven cavalry (riding dire boars and, just for fun, an ankylosaur). The whole gathering, hiring, and organizing of the army was clearly going to take the whole session, so I felt free throwing in whatever seemed good at the time—I knew I'd have a week between sessions to determine exactly how it was all going to work in the context of the adventure.

And in truth, all I did during that week was come up with some quick and dirty house rules for dealing with large groups of characters without rolling dice all night. The encounters I had planned would all stand as is, but they took on a different flavor. When monsters attacked the army, the PCs' goal wasn't (just) their own survival, but protecting the troops. The encounters with the dark elf strongholds weren't infiltration missions, they were frontal assaults where all the dark elven inhabitants mobilized at once. The following sessions, involving such large groups of combatants, were a brain-strain to run, but the players got into it (it was their idea, after all) and each took command of portions of the army, giving them orders and effectively "controlling" them, which took the burden off of me. It ended up being a memorable set of adventures.

The second and more difficult winging it situation is when the PCs go off in a direction you weren't planning for at all. You had a fun urban adventure ready but the PCs decide

to avoid the town and head off into the wilderness looking for adventure. And you don't have anything ready regarding that wilderness. You don't have a map of it, and you don't know what lives there. You've got nothing. In this case, you've got to take more drastic measures.

THE CURVE BALL

One tried and true tactic when the players throw you a complete curve ball is to throw one right back at them. In a recent session of the Ptolus campaign, the PCs were discussing what they were going to do with a rundown castle Erik Mona's character Barbatos had won in a gambling match. While I should have known that that's what would concern them in that particular session, I hadn't prepared for it at all. I could have winged it, but I knew that the whole rundown (and haunted) castle scenario was too important—too rife with possibilities—to run it on the fly. I knew I'd end up regretting not having given the situation enough thought.

So instead I threw them a curve ball. A NPC showed up on their doorstep (literally), calling in a favor that they owed him. The PCs knew they had to make good on the favor, as they owed the NPC a lot, so off they went on a completely tangential adventure.

(As an aside, this is one reason that I'm often generous with having NPCs do favors for the PCs—because it makes for future instant plot hooks when the NPCs need the PCs to do something for them.)

I've used the opposite type of "curve ball" adventure as well. In this scenario, an old enemy of the PCs shows up and attacks, stopping them dead in their tracks (tracks which lead off in a direction you're not prepared to go) and forcing them to fight or otherwise deal with the foe. A drawer full of NPC curve balls of your own is a necessary tool of a good DM. Sometimes they're old enemies, sometimes they're brand new foes. If you do it right, the PCs will see the sudden appearance of the foe as the start of a whole new adventure and not a delaying tactic on your part, even though that's exactly what it is.

The catch is, if you use this tactic too often, the players will see right through it. Rather than feel like it's an interesting encounter or side adventure, they'll just feel like it's a frustrating waste of time. It's funny but true—the perception of the players is so powerful that it can change a fun encounter into a boring one, even though the encounter stays the same.

The other potential drawback to the curve ball is that the players can begin to feel that every time they want to go off on a mission of their own choosing, you throw something in their way. That's a terrible lesson to teach them, because you want them to feel like they can do whatever you want.

In other words, sometimes when the players throw you a curve ball, you've just got to swing at it. You've got to go with where they want to go, even though you're unprepared.

THREE THINGS

During the aforementioned moments of DM downtime, when your attention isn't needed, put your brain into overdrive. Think about where events in the campaign have been, where they are now, and where they are probably going to go, and pull out three things—any three things that come to mind—and consider them the building blocks of your new adventure.

For example, say that the PCs have just defeated a group of grimlocks living in an abandoned mine and recovered some villagers they'd taken prisoner. You figured that they would escort the prisoners back to the village, but instead, they decide to press onward, deeper into the mine. But you're not prepared for that yet.

So you scramble for three things. Well, there's the villagers. Why were they captured? Some foul sacrifice? Check. Then there's the village. Was someone in the village working with the grimlocks? Check. Lastly, there's the mine. What if there's some ore left deep in the mine, and someone's after that ore—how about some deep dwarves coming up from below? Check.

Now, you've got some threads to put together the night's adventure. Deeper in the mines, the PCs find an evil temple where the grimlocks were going to sacrifice their prisoners. Somewhere in there, they find a clue that will lead them back to the evil human cultist in the village who's working with the grimlocks. They might also come upon the deep dwarves. Will they be friendly or hostile? That depends on what the PCs do, but either way it can be an interesting encounter. Pulling it all together, the deep dwarves may be enemies of the grimlocks, and the grimlocks in the evil temple—denied the villagers—may be preparing to sacrifice some dwarf prisoners.

Of course, you'll have to make up the deeper mine's layout on the fly. If you've got even a spare minute, scribble down some barest suggestion of a map in your notes so you know where you're going. Don't worry about scale or anything like that—you can fill in those details as you go. Make sure that you make some notes to yourself so that if they leave an area and then return, you remember the general layout of what you told them earlier.

You'll also have to throw together a grimlock evil priest for the temple. If that's too much for you to do on the fly, make it a human priest that's been leading the grimlocks (make sure to give him some light down there) and use the basic NPC stats provided in the *DMG*, or pull out an old cleric NPC that you had created for some other purpose and use those basic stats.

Above all else, never let the players see you sweat. They don't know what's going on behind the DM screen, and they don't have to know that you're as surprised to learn what's beyond the next door as they are.

Next: Preparing to be unprepared.

Monte Cook is the author of the DUNGEON MASTER'S Guide. *Check out his publishing company, Malhavoc Press, at montecook.com.*

ZUB

WET YOUR WHISTLE

BY ASHAVAN DOYON,
BY UDON WITH JIM ZUBKAVICH,

Players enter dozens of taverns in their adventuring careers, and many of them are just flimsy cardboard cutouts with little depth and only a hint of character. If you dread the task or lack the time to fully flesh out your local watering hole, fear not! Four of these facilities, each with its own unique character and personality, are presented here.

THE GOLDEN CANOPY

An unassuming three-story building has been quietly concealed in the midst of the busiest section of town. It lacks any signage or identifying marks, and the ground floor windows have been boarded up. Despite its decrepit appearance, a stream of nobles enters the establishment throughout the day. The Golden Canopy welcomes everyone, but the high prices ensure that the gentry comprise the vast majority of its patrons. **Otis Lunkler** (LG human male warrior 3/expert 3), a former member of the town guard, runs one of the finest inns in the nation.

Twelve years ago, Baron Artok almost lost his daughter to a vicious ogre barbarian. The town guard fled, except for Otis, who stood his ground against the brutal foe. The ogre crippled Otis, destroying his left leg, but the guard remained steadfast. His right ear still rings from the combat, and to this day he claims not to remember defeating the monster. But the baron,

chasing after the cruel creature, personally witnessed the guardsman's bravery. Baron Artok granted Otis the deed to the Golden Canopy (at the time a failing establishment that the baron's son had picked up in a game of cards) and provided him with a small fortune to turn the place around. The local nobility, anxious to associate with the baron's favorite hero, provided all the patronage he could hope for.

The boards on the windows and exterior facing of the building are all that remains of the previous Golden Canopy. Inside, the subdued and elegant establishment serves ale only by special request, while fine wines and exotic liqueurs are the usual drinks of choice. The guest rooms are renowned for both their comfort and opulence, and Otis is rumored to have entertained royalty from visiting nations within them. Otis remains the soul of discretion, and keeps the business of his loyal clientele a closely guarded secret.

Adventure hook: Otis has, at long last, found a lead on the unscrupulous wretch who hired the ogre barbarian to kidnap the baron's daughter. He cannot expose the culprit himself without risking his establishment's carefully fostered reputation for discretion, so he turns to the PCs for help.

ZHELAIRIA'S DELICIOUSLY DELICATE DINNERS AND DESSERTS

This small inn on the outskirts of the city is known more for its exotic cuisine than its small (but adequate) guest rooms. **Zhelairia of Altara** (CG female halfling expert 8) grew up the lone daughter of a famous diplomat. Her father brought along his family when he traveled, and Zhelairia soon discovered a passion for the exquisite cultural dishes from the state dinners she attended. Love of food is a healthy obsession in halfling culture, and Zhelairia's father decided to have her tutored by the finest chefs in the nations they visited. Zhelairia emerged as a talented gourmet, master of the cuisine of various races.

Zhelairia's customers tend to be from the upper crust of society, experts and professionals, as they are the ones who can afford her prices. Of course, she saves some of the most exotic dishes for aristocratic patrons and is rumored to routinely have axebeak and dire boar on a special menu available only to those with the platinum to back up their orders.

Adventure hook: Zhelairia provides an employment opportunity for PCs of any level, as she is always in need of ingredients. When one serves roast shocker lizard in orange plum sauce and filet of remorhaz, it can become difficult to procure the necessary raw materials.

THE COPPER LUTE

Toran Stonefist (LN male dwarf commoner 3) serves mostly common folk at his modest inn. Located in the market district, the Copper Lute is named for Toran's penchant for allowing aspiring minstrels to sing for their supper. The struggling students of the local bardic college know about Toran's policy, and the Copper Lute remains their favorite gathering place. The most talented of the young performers compete for the chance to sing before an audience that often includes many of the college's teachers and administrators. While visiting minstrels still have the opportunity to sing for their supper at the Copper Lute, most evenings are reserved for performances by the young bardic students.

Toran's establishment remains vibrant after more than a hundred years of continuous operation. It never closes, though only the most dismal performers play during the wee hours of the night, when no one remains awake to hear them. Toran enjoys watching every musician; his love of music undaunted by the many questionable performances. He claims to have heard the great bard Ilandaro perform once during those late hours, and is adamant that the dismal performers of today can become the greatest bards of tomorrow. Toran's prices are modest, and he welcomes adventurers, encouraging them to tell their tales to the students at the inn. More than one adventure has become a famous epic or ballad as a result of such prodding.

Adventure hook: Toran is very fond and protective of his students. One of his favorite performers has been kidnapped by the thieves' guild after Toran failed to pay a "protection" fee. Toran hires the adventurers to infiltrate the guild and rescue the boy.

ARROWS AT REST

The widow **Lillavida** (NG female human adept 5), runs this tiny inn and tavern located a day's ride outside the city. Raised to be a wise-woman by her tribe in the far north, Vida fell in love with a stranger, an adventuring paladin named Aerol. The two had a whirlwind courtship, and were soon married. When Aerol left the northern reaches, returning to his homeland, Lillavida came with him. Aerol continued to adventure, leaving his wife to raise their children, two beautiful daughters who shared Vida's pale skin and delicate features. Then, on an evil day some 10 years past, Aerol failed to return. Vida is still waiting for him to come home, though in the past few years she has reluctantly accepted the title widow, even if she doesn't believe it.

Arrows at Rest was Vida's solution to her husband's alarming habit of returning, companions in tow, in desperate need of rest, recovery, and healing. Still the practical child of a tribal culture, Vida could not bear for the rooms to be empty while Aerol was off fighting for causes. She runs a down-to-earth establishment, serving ordinary travelers who are just passing through, but she is always ready with necessities that cater to adventuring needs: replacement weapons, healing potions, and a safe place to rest and recuperate.

Adventure hook: Lillavida has never given up on her husband's return. Her quest to seek word of him could lead the PCs on any number of missions in exchange for her hospitality.

EXPRESS TRAVEL

BY RUSSELL BROWN
BY JOE BOULDEN

Sometimes the journey from one place to another can be more rewarding than the actual goal. Occasionally, however, the pace and continuity of the story require that the PCs reach their destination quickly. Here are twelve types of express travel, along with some ideas on how to introduce them into your campaign.

AIRSHIPS

Some cultures in your campaign may be advanced enough to create flying machines: lighter-than-air balloons or dangerous winged contraptions kept aloft by a combination of technology and magic. With a favorable wind, travelers aboard such craft can cover 400 miles a day or more. Travel aboard an airship is generally uneventful, except for encounters with other passengers and the occasional life-threatening mechanical problem. If airships are rare, passage is likely to be costly. Your campaign could have a few regular airship routes, or a patron or someone in need of help could send an airship especially for your PCs.

DRAGONS

Metallic dragons are intelligent and wise creatures, often devising complicated and mysterious schemes to reach long-term goals. If your party's quest coincides with a dragon's plans, there are many ways these powerful creatures could get them to their destination.

For example, a mature adult silver dragon (*Monster Manual* 86) can cast spells as a 9th-level sorcerer, giving it access to *teleport*. Even a lesser dragon could simply fly to the desired location with an entire party on its back, covering nearly 200 miles a day.

FAST HORSES

Though a typical light horse can carry a rider only 32 miles in a single day (*Player's Handbook* 164), your PCs could double that distance by switching mounts along the way. They could also perform a forced march if the nonlethal damage incurred can be magically healed. *Horseshoes of speed* (DUNGEON MASTER'S *Guide* 260) quicken a single horse, but in order for the party to travel faster, each PC will need a set.

FLYING MAGIC ITEMS

Your PCs could cover more ground if each of them possess *wings of flying* (DUNGEON MASTER'S *Guide* 268) or a *broom of flying* (DUNGEON MASTER'S *Guide* 250). An entire party can fit on a *carpet of flying* (DUNGEON MASTER'S *Guide* 252). But because these magic items have extremely long or continuous effects that do not expire, you may wish to come up with a way to take them away from your PCs when the journey ends. A powerful NPC might loan the party these items, but will your players go out of their way to return them? Perhaps the magic items fly home by themselves after a certain amount of time.

FLYING MOUNTS

Your PCs can avoid most obstacles and unwanted encounters by flying to their destination rather than walking. Dire bats, griffons, hippogriffs, giant eagles, giant owls, and even rocs can be trained to carry riders. An NPC that needs the party's help could send them mounts, or they could be a one-time loan from someone the party saved in a previous adventure. If you plan ahead, you could include a simple magic device in the treasure from a previous encounter, like a whistle or a stick of incense that can be used to summon flying mounts a limited number of times.

MAGIC PORTALS

While magic portals often connect two planes of existence, they can also link distant places within the same plane. A portal may be one-way or two-way, and it may only be active periodically, or only when a command word is spoken or a specific item is present. Since you create the portal, you can control its impact on your campaign. You can make the existence of a portal seem less contrived if you hint at it earlier in your campaign through ancient legends, inscriptions on magic items, or NPC journals.

PASSING TIME

If you simply want to move your PCs to a new destination in a short amount of real time and in-game time doesn't matter, all you need to do is reduce their interaction with the outside world. If the entire party is under a *sleep* spell, held tight in the talons of a group of rocs, or has fallen deathly seasick, there should be no encounters during the trip and it should last only as long it takes to describe it. However, be ready to improvise if you end up with a resourceful party that figures out a way to escape from their quiescent state.

SAILING

Since the speed of a ship varies dramatically with weather and local currents, travel times over water are less predictable than over land. If you provide ideal sailing conditions, a well-run sailing ship could cover well over 100 miles a day. If the crew is uninteresting and there is nothing mysterious about the ship, a short description of the trip should be all that is needed to get the PCs to their destination.

SHADOW WALK

Shadow walk (*Player's Handbook* 277) is available to high-level arcane spellcasters. With this spell, the caster and a party of companions can travel hundreds of miles in a few hours without encounters. You can describe the terrain and creatures of the Plane of Shadow seen from afar as the PCs travel along the plane's edge (see the DUNGEON MASTER'S *Guide* 152). If your PCs are not powerful enough to cast this spell, you can provide them with a patron or hireling spellcaster. Better yet, give your PCs a scroll of *shadow walk* in a monster's treasure hoard.

SPECIAL MOUNTS

Mounts specifically adapted to local terrain can speed up cross-country travel. If your PCs are crossing a desert on camels, crashing through a jungle inside an elephant's howdah, or gliding across a glacier on the back of a trained frost worm, they can get a glimpse of the world going by without feeling like they are missing out on random encounters. Since your PCs probably aren't familiar with these special mounts, they may require assistance from local NPCs who ride them routinely.

TELEPORT

Arcane spellcasters have access to *teleport* (*Player's Handbook* 292), and some creatures (like unicorns) have a limited ability to teleport others. Teleporting may be the fastest way to travel, but it is not always accurate, and a bad *teleport* may result in a great deal of additional playing time. If you can provide your PCs with a lengthy vision of their destination, you'll significantly increase their chance of success. A lock of hair found wrapped in a scroll of *scrying* may be just what they need.

WIND WALK

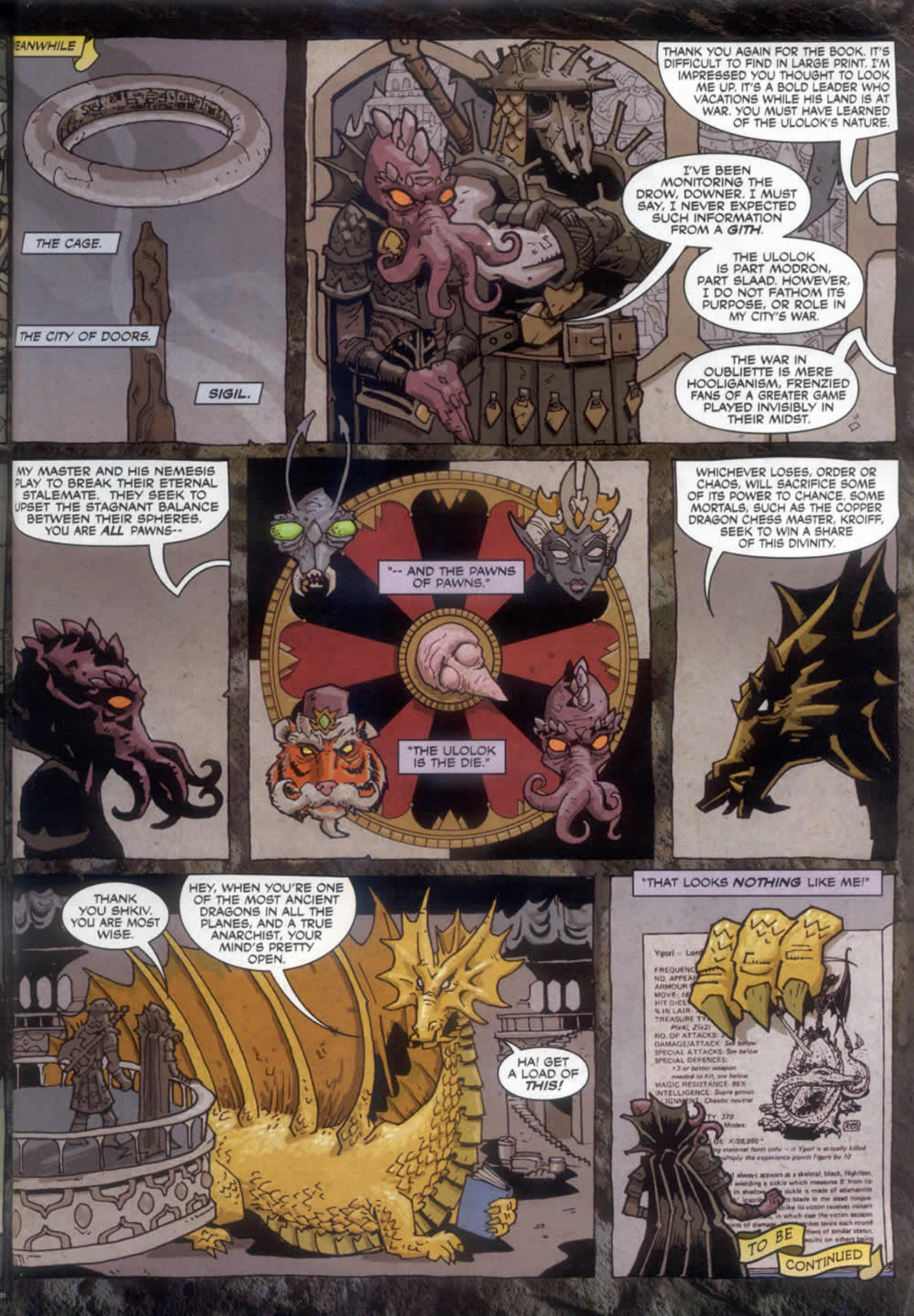
Wind walk (*Player's Handbook* 302), which is available to djinni (*Monster Manual* 114) and to high-level divine spellcasters, allows the caster and a few companions to travel hundreds of miles in only a few hours, and it doesn't have *teleport*'s risk of failure. *Wind walk* allows the PCs to see the world passing by them, so you should provide a brief description of the trip and enough information to allow them to navigate to their destination. *Wind walk* is a high-level spell, so your party may need the help of a powerful NPC spellcaster.

Downer VI

Fool's Errand

"NOW HOW AM I SUPPOSED TO WIN AN ARCHERY CONTEST AFTER THE DAMN ULOLOK BITES ME? IT'S UPSET I BET THE GITHYANKI FOR THE GUN. I GET IT. MY HAND IS KILLING ME. EVEN IF I TIE, I LOSE TWO FINGERS TO THE CRAZY DRUID. LUCKY ME, I'M DOWN BY TWO AND IT'S MY LAST SHOT. TIME TO **CHEAT**."

Story and art by Kyle Stanley Hunter. Lettering by Sean Glenn. Downer is ©2004 Kyle Stanley Hunter. A Super Unicorn production. www.superunicorn.com


EANWHILE
THE CAGE.
THE CITY OF DOORS.
SIGIL.
THANK YOU AGAIN FOR THE BOOK. IT'S DIFFICULT TO FIND IN LARGE PRINT. I'M IMPRESSED YOU THOUGHT TO LOOK ME UP. IT'S A BOLD LEADER WHO VACATIONS WHILE HIS LAND IS AT WAR. YOU MUST HAVE LEARNED OF THE ULOLOK'S NATURE.
I'VE BEEN MONITORING THE DROW, DOWNER. I MUST SAY, I NEVER EXPECTED SUCH INFORMATION FROM A GITH.
THE ULOLOK IS PART MODRON, PART SLAAD. HOWEVER, I DO NOT FATHOM ITS PURPOSE, OR ROLE IN MY CITY'S WAR.
THE WAR IN OUBLIETTE IS MERE HOOLIGANISM, FRENZIED FANS OF A GREATER GAME PLAYED INVISIBLY IN THEIR MIDST.
MY MASTER AND HIS NEMESIS PLAY TO BREAK THEIR ETERNAL STALEMATE. THEY SEEK TO UPSET THE STAGNANT BALANCE BETWEEN THEIR SPHERES. YOU ARE ALL PAWNS--
"-- AND THE PAWNS OF PAWNS."
"THE ULOLOK IS THE DIE."
WHICHEVER LOSES, ORDER OR CHAOS, WILL SACRIFICE SOME OF ITS POWER TO CHANCE. SOME MORTALS, SUCH AS THE COPPER DRAGON CHESS MASTER, KROIFF, SEEK TO WIN A SHARE OF THIS DIVINITY.
THANK YOU SHKIV. YOU ARE MOST WISE.
HEY, WHEN YOU'RE ONE OF THE MOST ANCIENT DRAGONS IN ALL THE PLANES, AND A TRUE ANARCHIST, YOUR MIND'S PRETTY OPEN.
HA! GET A LOAD OF THIS!
"THAT LOOKS NOTHING LIKE ME!"
TO BE CONTINUED

SEWER STRONGHOLD
of the THIEVES' GUILD
1 Sewer Tunnels
2 Bridge
3 Secret Passages
4 Seneschal's Quarters
5 Audience Chamber
6 Guildmaster's Study
7 Guildmaster's Quarters
KEY
8 Rogue Training Hall
9 Sentinel Chamber
10 Guest Quarters
11 Guildmembers' Barracks
12 Privies
13 Holding Cell
14 Interrogation Room
15 Treasury Vaults
16 Arrow Slits
17 Tavern Cellar
18 Kitchen
19 Feasthall
20 Main Entrance
1 square = 5 feet
Cartography by Chris West
WEST

DUNGEON #128

MAP & HANDOUT SUPPLEMENT

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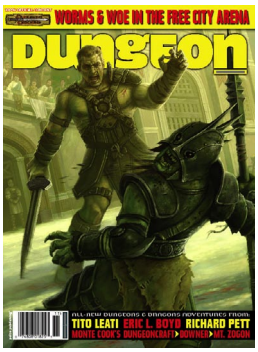

Joachim Barrum

THE CHAMPION'S BELT

by Tito Leati

The Champion's Games are here! Gladiators from around the world converge in the Free City! Yet this year, something dire festers in the arena's foundations, for its director plots one of the final omens heralding the Age of Worms. An Age of Worms Adventure Path scenario for 9th-level characters.

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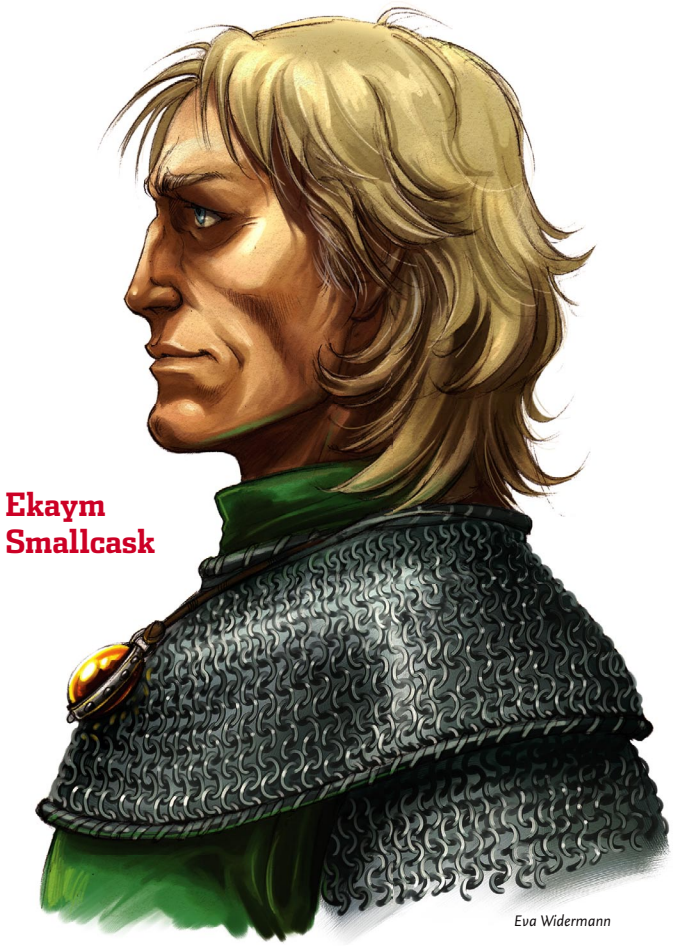
Celeste

Eva Widermann



Ekaym Smallcask

Eva Widermann

Okoral

Eva Widermann

Loris Raknian

Eva Widermann

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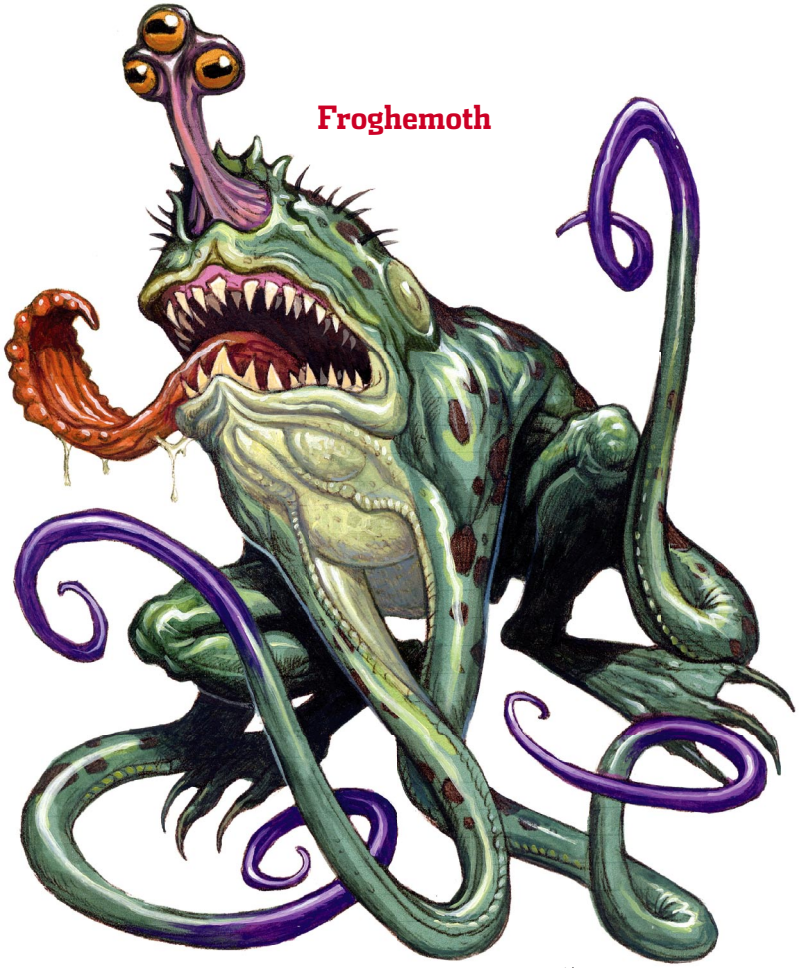
Bozal Zahol

Eva Widermann

Froghemoth



Eva Widermann

Steve Prescott

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Robert Lazzaretti

Robert Lazzaretti

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RUNNING "THE CHAMPION'S BELT" IN THE FORGOTTEN REALMS

by Eric L. Boyd

Conversion notes for Waterdeep (Free City), Dagsumn (Eligos), and Kyrss Wands (Pollard) are given in the Realms conversion sidebar for "Hall of Harsh Reflections." Conversion notes for Theldrick, a priest of Bane (Hextor), are given in the Realms conversion sidebar for "Three Faces of Evil."

Field of Triumph

The Field of Triumph (Free City Arena) ($77) is one of the chief attractions of the City of Splendors. This huge open-air stadium is the site of various spectacles staged for the populace of Waterdeep. From late spring to late autumn, thousands of people flood through the awe-inspiring Lion Gate to witness shows of magic, martial skills, horse races, and exhibitions of monstrous creatures big and small. The field also acts as a public forum for mportant public events such as the Open Lord's proclamations to the city and gatherings for foreign dignitaries. The Field of Triumph is closely associated with the church of Tempus (Kord). An old shrine of Tempus beneath the arena (now a shrine of Kyuss) has been abandoned in favor of the House of Heroes.

The Field of Triumph is mapped in *City of Splendors*: *Waterdeep*, page 99. The House of Heroes ($58) (the primary church of the Lord of Battles in Waterdeeep), is located just north of the Field of Triumph across Jelzar's Stride. Prendergast's Villa (Raknian's Palace) lies in the southeast corner of the block just west of the House of Heroes, across Jelzar's Stride from the Field of Triumph. The Games Administration Building, Prendergast's Bodyguards Barracks (Raknian's Bodyguards Barracks), and Raknian's Stables are the three adjacent buildings due west of Prendergast's Villa (with the stables actually opening onto the small alleyway that runs north/south through the center of the block). The chimney (area **F**) that leads up from the Coenoby kitchen (area **17**) opens into the southern end of the alley in the block due east of the House of Heroes.

The Warden's Barracks and the west entrance into the Field of Triumph (not shown) face onto Seaeye's March. The passage (B) from area **5** to Prendergast's Villa actually runs under Jelzar's Stride. The eastern entrance to the Field of Triumph is the aforementioned awe-inspiring Lion Gate. The south entrances into the Field of Triumph (not shown) open on to Julthoon Street.

All areas on the Hidden Shrine of Kyuss map marked "To Stream" (including those found in areas **16**, **21**, and **22**) are actually tertiary passages that connect with the secondary sewer passage (and its east fork) that leads north from the primary passage west of SF18, as shown in *City of Splendors*: *Waterdeep*, page 123. The nearest surface shaft is area SF18 (which corresponds to area **G** on the map), which is actually placed roughly south of area **20** on the map and opens on the surface in a cul-de-sac opening northeast of Toalar's Lane.

House Phylund

House Phylund has long been known for training and procuring fierce monsters. In the Year of the Turret (1360 DR), **Lord Urtos Phylund I** (Lahaka), the widowed patriarch of House Phylund and director of the Field of Triumph, fell for the charms of **Lady Aridarye** (NE female Tethyrian human aristocrat 7), who had moved to Waterdeep the year before as the consort of an Amnite trader and soon found herself at home amongst the parties and intrigues of Waterdeep's merchant nobility. After Aridarye set her sights on Urtos I, she quickly arranged the death of her former lover by setting him up to pay for some illicit goods in a Dock Ward alley with counterfeit coins. Aridarye married Lord Urtos I in the month of Ches and gave birth to a baby boy, Urtos III, in the Year of the Wave (1364 DR). During this time, Lady Aridarye was instrumental in orchestrating the sharp increase of House Phylund's fortunes.

In the Year of the Sword (1365 DR), two tragedies struck House Phylund. First Lord Urtos II (Ekaym Smallcask), eldest son and heir of Urtos I, fell victim to a wolf pack during a hunting trip to the Phylund Hunting Lodge in Ardeep Forest during the month of Alturiak and was presumed dead. (A servant in the hunting party seeking to curry favor with Lady Aridarye employed a scroll she provided to summon a huge pack of wolves, but the magic of the scroll "accidentally" consumed him as well.) A grief-stricken, sullen Urtos I fell soon after, having apparently grown careless while transporting a caged owlbear into a holding cell beneath the Field of Triumph. The cage wasn't locked properly, costing the patriarch of House Phylund and six beast handlers their lives. Aridarye, playing the grieving widow, laid her husband to rest and compensated the families of the deceased for their losses. She planned to have her young son named lord and herself named regent, giving her complete control of the Phylund family fortune.

Aridarye's plans unraveled eight days after the funeral of Urtos I, when Lord Urtos II (LN afflicted werewolf [augmented Tethyrian human] fighter 10) returned unexpectedly, two months after his disappearance. The mantle of lordship passed to Urtos II, and Aridarye was reduced to the role of tolerated stepmother.

Within a year of his return, Lord Urtos II married Lythis Mhairuun (NG female Tashlutan human aristocrat 5), sole heir to the Tashlutan merchant family's watchspider business. She bore him three sons, but the Lords of Waterdeep have barred any of them from inheriting the patriarchy of House Phylund (presumably because they fear the taint of lycanthropy that has infected their line). As such, Urtos III, half-brother of Urtos II and son of Aridarye, remains the heir. Urtos II is primarily involved with the raising of his young family and tending to the fortunes of House Phylund.

Although he keeps a civil relationship with his former stepmother, Urtos II recently discovered that the bones of his late father had gone missing from the family vault, renewing his longstanding suspicions that there was something mysterious about his father's death and that Aridarye might have been involved. As such, Urtos II has hit upon the idea of sponsoring a team of gladiators in this year's Champion's Games and using them to search for clues beneath the Field of Triumph. When Event 4 unfolds, Urtos II explains that his old friendship with Prendergast and complicated relationship with Aridarye make it difficult for him to search for clues beneath the arena. He implicates Aridarye, not Prendergast, in the murder of his father, and is unwilling to consider any implication that Prendergast might have been involved.

House Brokengulf

In addition to exploration and guiding, House Brokengulf has made its fortune hunting and procuring exotic beasts for sale in the City of Splendors. **Prendergast "Gast" Brokengulf** (CE male Tethyrian human fighter 13) (Loris Raknian), heir to the lordship of House Brokengulf and uncle of the current lord, fell to Aridarye's charms in the Year of the Wave (1364 DR). At the time, Lord Prendergast was a noted hunter and prominent gladiator with many victories on the Field of Triumph. Despite his close working relationship with Lord Urtos I and friendship with Urtos II,

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Prendergast succumbed to Aridarye's wiles and arranged the accident that killed Lord Urtos I in the tunnels beneath the arena.

In the years that followed, Prendergast and Aridarye continued their twisted relationship, eventually marrying in the Year of the Banner (1368 DR). Despite his fear of aging and death, his all-consuming guilt over his misdeeds, and Aridarye's endless manipulations, Prendergast became director of the Field of Triumph and was instrumental in arranging the first Champion's Games (at Aridarye's urging) as a way to increase the market for the wares of House Brokengulf and House Phylund. During this period, Prendergast's narcissistic personality could not tolerate the inevitable decline of his mortal body, and as the once indomitable hunter and gladiator of a thousand fights watched his hair turn gray and felt his bones begin to ache, he realized time was the only opponent he could not beat. Prendergast secretly grew more and more jealous of the impudent, ambitious young gladiators who fought for glory in his arena. Yet he dared not endanger his public image, so he kept his jealousy well hidden. Over the years, this jealousy, coupled with his lasting guilt over his role in the death of Lord Urtos I, festered and ate at him from within. Prendergast began to use his vast resources to search for a method to restore his vigor and youth, but as one solution after another proved false, his fear only grew.

In the Year of the Unstrung Harp (1371 DR), Aridarye arranged a meeting between her aging husband and a mysterious cleric from the Inner Sea Lands named Bozal Zahol (referred to her by her former lover, Theldrick). Bozal Zahol spoke of secret rituals and potent prayers that, if offered to his mysterious god, could halt the aging process. Bozal Zahol told of how his deity held in his hand the keys to decay, and only he could exempt a human from old age. Although Aridarye was intrigued, Prendergast was naturally suspicious, and when Bozal Zahol wouldn't offer him proof or reveal the name of his patron, Prendergast had the cleric escorted from his villa—but not before accepting a small magic token that would allow Prendergast to contact Bozal if (when) he changed his mind. That would have been the end of the story, if not for the ever-changing whims of Aridarye.

In the Year of Wild Magic (1372 DR), Aridarye became involved with a handsome young gladiator named Auric, but word of their affair got back to Prendergast. Lady Aridarye coldly informed her husband that he was no longer welcome in her bed, saying he had grown too old to satisfy her and that he had rejected her efforts to find a way to keep him young. Still consumed with guilt over his role in the death of Urtos I and morbidly depressed over Aridarye's rejection, Prendergast used the token to contact Bozal and convince him to return to Waterdeep. In his off hours, the director of the Field of Triumph spent much of his time with Bozal, learning more with each passing night of Kyuss and his dark promises. Under Bozal's direction, Prendergast began funneling much of his monthly income to back Theldrick and the Ebon Triad, unaware that in so doing he is funding one of his wife's former lovers. (Aridarye has caught wind that Prendergast is spending time and money on something, but she has yet to figure out where the funds are going.) Prendergast and Bozal began to secretly prepare the ritual to mark Prendergast as a favorite of Kyuss, since escape from decay was a favor granted only to the most devout worshipper of Kyuss. Such an unholy miracle also required a massive sacrifice performed by one of the Apostles of Kyuss, the "Blood of a Champion," and the bones of a victim murdered by the would-be favorite of Kyuss. To meet the last requirement, Prendergast had the corpse of Lord Urtos I stolen from House Phylund's family tomb and gave them over to Bozal.

Prendergast is now firmly in Bozal's clutches. The two have chosen this year's Champion's Games as the altar for their sacrifice to Kyuss, as Prendergast has come to believe that the gladiators scheme against him and wait eagerly for his demise so one of them can replace him as the younger, more handsome director of the Field of Triumph. One gladiator in particular, the fighter Auric, has become synonymous with Prendergast's paranoia, and if all goes according to plan, it will be Auric's blood that anoints the Apostle of Kyuss during the final game.

Lady Aridarye Phylund Brokengulf

Lady Aridarye Phylund Brokengulf is a viper in a comely human shell who expertly wields people and money as tools and has infallible trade instincts. She has played a key role in the ongoing familial intrigues of House Phylund and Brokengulf over the past fifteen years.

Often mistaken for a much younger woman, Aridarye has attractive, slender figure and hair that falls to her waist, though she normally wears it piled in elaborate coiffures confined by her favorite golden headdress. Her eyes are a warm chestnut brown, but many who cross her swear they turn scarlet with her fury. Her smile can dazzle a suitor or freeze the blood of an assassin. Aridarye wears expensive, form-flattering gowns and dresses, favoring blue and purple, and is never without her ornate dagger.

Aridarye is the consummate businesswoman, able to foresee trends in the marketplaces of Waterdeep and the Sword Coast. She is far more practiced at bookkeeping and business than most other Waterdhavian nobles. Despite her appearance, Aridarye is a private woman, not prone to revealing secrets. Among the social-climbing, money-conscious nobility, she is noted for her flawless tact and grace. Her customers and fellow merchants comment on her good business sense. She is famous for her bell-like laugh, but always remains tight-lipped and in control while in public. To her servants, family, and close associates, she is a high-handed martinet with a great need to feel in control. When pleased, she carries the subtle yet unmistakable air of a promiscuous hedonist.

Aridarye is aware that something is afoot, but she remains ignorant of the depths of her husband's desperation or his renewed involvement with Bozal. She continues her affair with Auric during his infrequent visits to the city, while at the same time she tightens her control over the fortunes of House Brokengulf and House Phylund. Aridarye stays by her husband's side during the Free Dinner and subsequent gladiatorial events and remains a wild card in the throughout the adventure. She finds her former stepson's sudden interest in the games suspicious and worries that he is plotting to supplant Prendergast as director of the Field of Triumph. Likewise, she finds her husband's mysterious new commitments worrisome and wonders what is afoot. During the dinner, the PCs may observe Aridarye's close observation of both Prendergast and Urtos II with a DC 20 Sense Motive check.

Aridarye has informants among the employees of the Field of Triumph, and if they observe any suspicious behavior on the part of the PCs, word quickly gets back to Lady Aridarye. Aridarye then has the PCs watched, trying to determine what they are up to and what they have learned. She is not above attempting to seduce one of the PCs if there is no other way to obtain the information she needs. Eventually, Aridarye concludes that the PCs are a threat to her position, for they might expose her husband's crimes. As such, she does her best to undermine them, possibly by using inter-

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mediaries to cast doubt on the motives and nature of Urtos II.

The Gladiators

Tirra is a member of the Shadow Thieves (Guild of Thieves), a newly resurgent thieves' guild outlawed over a century ago by the Lords of Waterdeep and now firmly ensconsed in the power structure of Amn.

Arcane Auriga is composed of exiles from Evereska (Celene).

Joren is a member of the Gray Wolf Uthgardt tribe and his team, the Spine's Revenge (Badlands Revenge) is named for the Spine of the World mountain range far to the north.

The Sapphire Squad hails from Calimshan.

The Hidden Shrine of Kyuss

The zombie made from the corpse of Lord Urtos I is also necessary to complete the ritual. It waits patiently within the Ulgurstasa Chamber (area **32**, not area **29**) and is clearly visible from the Pump Room (area **26**). The Apostle of Kyuss consumes the zombie before bursting through the floor of the arena to attack Auric.

RUNNING "THE CHAMPION'S BELT" IN EBERRON

by Keith Baker

In "The Champion's Belt" the adventurers battle for supremacy in the arena of the Free City in the hopes of stopping Loris Raknian from making a terrible sacrifice to Kyuss. Here are a few ideas for converting the adventure to the world of Eberron.

Who is Kyuss?

The Age of Worms is driven by the schemes of the Cult of Kyuss. But how does this group fit into Eberron? In this adventure, Eligos tells the party of the threat that lies ahead.

In Eberron, Kyuss is not a god. He is a wizard born in Sarlona over two thousand years ago, who was driven to Khorvaire by those who feared his dark magics. He established a city in the region now known as Q'barra, where he continued his study of necromancy. But Kyuss was not content with mortal magic. He learned of an ancient power of undeath: Katashka the Gatekeeper, one of the overlords of the Age of Demons. Kyuss pledged himself to Katashka and learned his terrible secrets, including the creation of worm-infested spawn. Ultimately Kyuss sought to become a physical vessel for Katashka's power, and he sacrificed his city of followers to accomplish this task. But somewhere along the way he had miscalculated, by joining his soul to the spirit of Katashka, he bound himself into the demon's prison. Kyuss had doomed himself for eternity.

However, with the return of the spawn of Kyuss and the reappearance of Kyuss' cult, it's clear that sages were too quick to dismiss the threat. The obscure prophecy of the Age of Worms had drawn little attention until now, but Eligos believes that it speaks of the release of Katashka-Kyuss and heralds an age of terror.

Eligos believes that fiendish servants of Katashka are behind the reemergence of the Cult of Kyuss, and that these Lords of Dust have also been manipulating the Ebon Triad.

Celeste and Manzorian

The Lords of Dust are not unopposed in their quest to reshape Eberron, and their most implacable foes are the dragons of the Chamber. Manzorian is one such dragon, and Celeste is one of his agents. Despite their personal power, they are bound by draconic law and the dictates of the Prophecy: if Katashka-Kyuss is to be truly defeated, it must be accomplished using the tools of the Prophecy: the player characters.

Celeste could be left as an eladrin, a rare outsider who has chosen to leave her home plane to fight evil on Eberron. However, in keeping with her role as an agent of the Chamber, it makes more sense for her to be a dragon (CG female silver dragon) in human form.

The Arena

In Eberron, the Free City Arena is replaced with the Hollow Tower in Middle Dura, mentioned in *Sharn: City of Towers*. Death-matches are not normally allowed under the Code of Galifar, but aggressive sports are fine as long as healers are on hand to care for the losers. However, accidents do happen and there have been less enlightened times in the past, allowing for the "spirits of those who died in the arena" to rise up in Part Four of the adventure.

While the arena is located in Middle Dura, it nonetheless still has the caves beneath it, along with the other chambers described in the adventure. The Hollow Tower is located in the district of Hareth's Folly, which is renowned for its bizarre architecture. In this case, the coenoby is not remotely natural; the mad architect Hareth ir'Talan created an artificial cavern beneath the arena.

The Thieves' Guild

Sharn includes a number of criminal guilds. Tirra is a member of the Boromar Clan, which is described in more detail in *Sharn: City of Towers*; while run by halflings, the Boromars employ thieves of all races. The master thief is Saidan Boromar.

The Gladiators

The members of Arcane Auriga are exiles from Aerenal, expelled for their violent tendencies and misuse of magic. The gnolls of Badlands Revenge were recruited from the Brotherhood of Droaam. Joren is a half-orc from the Shadow Marches, although his motivation is unchanged. Korush of the Sapphire Squad is an exotic traveler, as Janni are rarely seen in Khorvaire; he may tell tales of a fabulous city of Janni in the depths of Xen'drik, hidden from human eyes. Korush is sponsored by House Lyrandar, and is especially friendly to any member of that house.

The Froghemoth

The froghemoth was brought to Sharn from a vast, marshy region of Xen'drik; it's never been seen on Khorvaire before, but others could be encountered on future trips to Xen'drik.

The Shrine of Kyuss

This was previously a shrine dedicated to the war god Dol Dorn, and the desecrated symbols of Dol Dorn and the Sovereign Host can be seen throughout the area.

Bozal Zahol

Bozal is descended from fiends, but not devils or demons. The blood of his ancestors was twisted by traffic with the rakshasa. As such, Bozal does not have horns or hooves. His tail is the tail of a great cat, and his eyes are large and yellow, with vertically slit pupils. His dark hair has orange tiger stripes, and his ears are long and pointed. Mechanically, he retains the powers of a tiefling; but anyone who makes a DC 20 Knowledge (the planes) check recognizes his rakshasa ancestry.

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Mat Dixon

BACKDROP: THE FREE CITY

by Richard Pett

Welcome to Midnight's Muddle, a lively Free City neighborhood packed with friends and foes alike. As the Age of Worms marches ever forward, the Muddle offers your PCs new contacts and a new home.

Robert Lazzaretti

Tarquin

Mat Dixon

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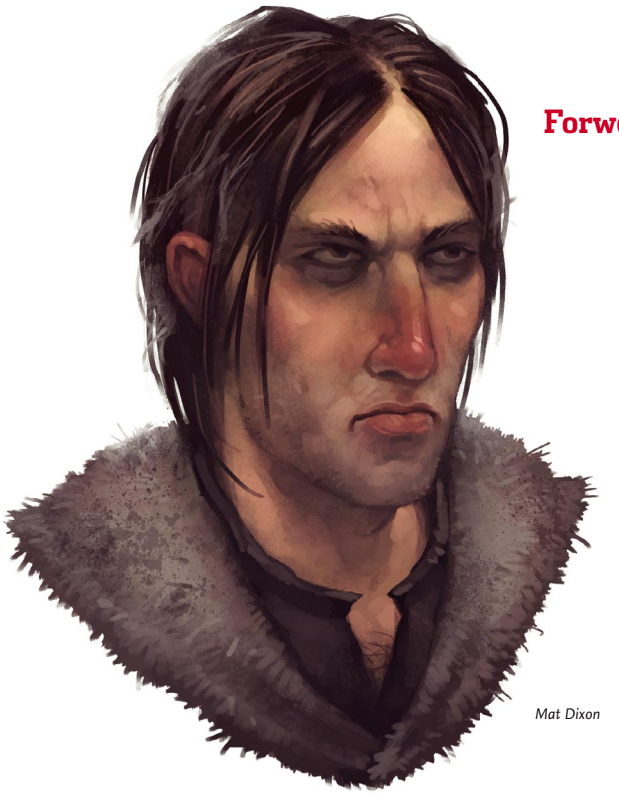

Forwell Hog

Mat Dixon

Ermelda Webb

Mat Dixon

MIDNIGHT'S MUDDLE IN THE FORGOTTEN REALMS

by Eric L. Boyd

The neighborhood known as Midnight's Muddle occupies one block within City Ward, just southeast of the Market. Midnight's Muddle is bounded by Bazaar Street, the High Road, Lamp Street, and the Street of Bells. Thanks to its close proximity to the Market, the neighborhood suffered some damage during the Time of Troubles, but not enough to be substantially rebuilt. As a result, Midnight's Muddle is a little more rundown than the surrounding area and is more akin to Dock Ward than neighboring North Ward. A single alley, Midnight's Muddle (Nevern Walk, Bobclay's Alley and Muddle Street) curves through the heart of the block, reachable via two narrow lanes connecting to the Street of Bells to the west.

Conversion notes for Waterdeep (Free City), Dagsumn (Eligos), and Kyrss Wands (Pollard) are given in the Realms conversion sidebar for "Hall of Harsh Reflections."

1. The Crooked House

The Crooked House lies at the northern tip of the block, at the corner of the High Road and Bazaar Street. Tarquin Shortstone XXVI is an old friend of Dagsumn and proprietor of the Crooked House. He frequently meets Dagsumn for a friendly game of lanceboard (dragonchess) at the Elfstone Tavern (C32).

9. Two-Boy Theatre

Ludwick, the wererat orphanage owner, is or was a member of the lycanthropic gang known as the Plague Rats. The ruins of his orphanage can be reached from Deloun Alley. (See *City of Splendors: Waterdeep*, page 57.)

10. Shortstone Wines

This building was formerly a shrine of Helm.

12. Ruined Shrine

This building was formerly a shrine of Tyr.

16. Tattoo Parlor

Jharan Hubris escaped slavery in Thay, where he learned his craft. (He has the Tattoo Magic feat, detailed in *Races of Faerûn*, page 170, and *Lords of Darkness*, page 189.) Since the Thayan's opened an embassy just north of the market (C70), he has kept a low profile, fearful that someone might recognize him and have him kidnapped and returned to his old master.

20. Shrine of the Weeping Woman

Forwell Hog purports to worship an obscure Ilmatari saint known as the Weeping Woman, the patroness of children lost in war.

29-35. The Muddle

The Muddle only occupies three buildings in Waterdeep (numbered **29**, **30**, **31**). These buildings are owned by Kerril Husteem (Kerril Besk), a member of House Husteem and cousin of the current patriarch, Lord Orbos Husteem.

37. Cragsmere's (Web's) Rooftop Lanceboard (Dragonchess) Parlor

This building is owned by Ermelda Cragsmere (Ermelda Web), a member of House Cragsmere and paternal aunt of the current patriarch, Japhyl "The Hawk" Cragsmere. One member of Ermelda's regular clientele is "Hurlblar Corthyn," who appears to be a book collector who dwells in modest upper rooms above Ragathan Furriers (N43). Further details on "Hurlblar" may be found in *City of Splendors: Waterdeep*, page 31. Hurlblar is friends with Ermelda and views her continued safety with parental concern due to his long-forgotten ties to House Cragsmere.

38. Shrine to Silvanus (Obad-hai)

This building is a shrine to Silvanus.

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Mike May

SHUT-IN

by F. Wesley Schneider and James Lafond Sutter

Not all evil spawns in ancient ruins or on fiendish planes. Sometimes, all corruption needs to take root is a jealous memory, cultivated bitterness, and a lonely place to bloom. A D&D adventure for 2nd-level characters.

Auraluna and Ceseli

Kieran Yanner

Peck

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Chad du Lac & Udon with Mark Sinclair & Gala Ferriere

THE FIREPLACE LEVEL

by Eric L. Boyd

As the party faces an ancient foe who has never been defeated, their hunt threatens to unleash the buried ghosts of a forgotten feud between two of Waterdeep's powerful merchant houses. The third adventure in the Vampires of Waterdeep Campaign Arc, "The Fireplace Level" is a FORGOTTEN REALMS adventure for 14th-level characters.

Arrik Kaarvol

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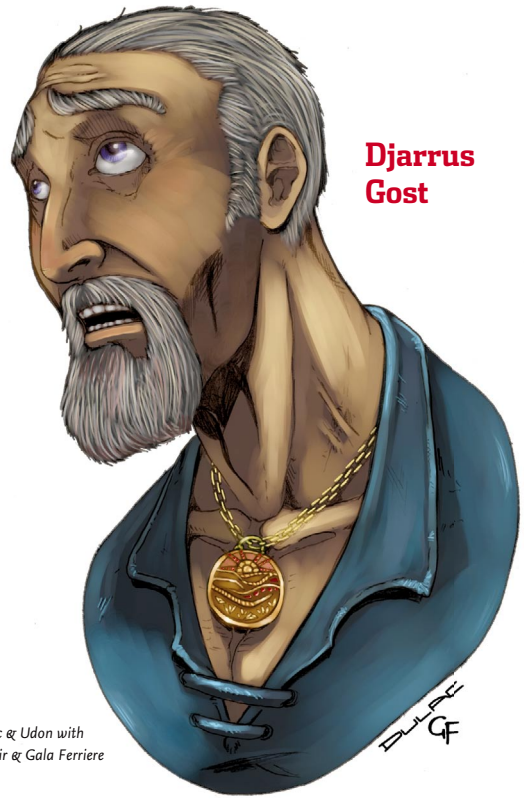

Djarrus Gost

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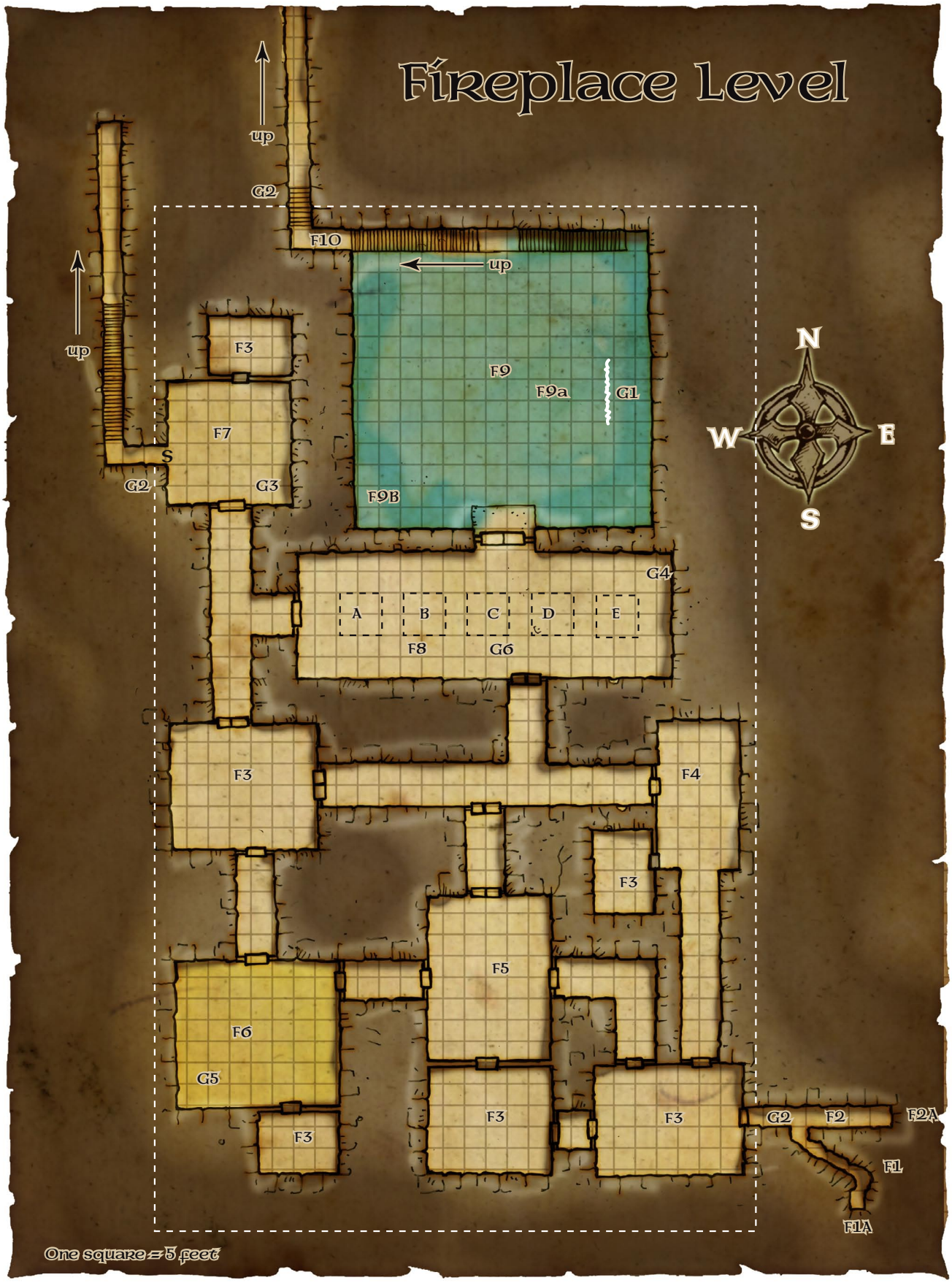

Robert Lazzaretti

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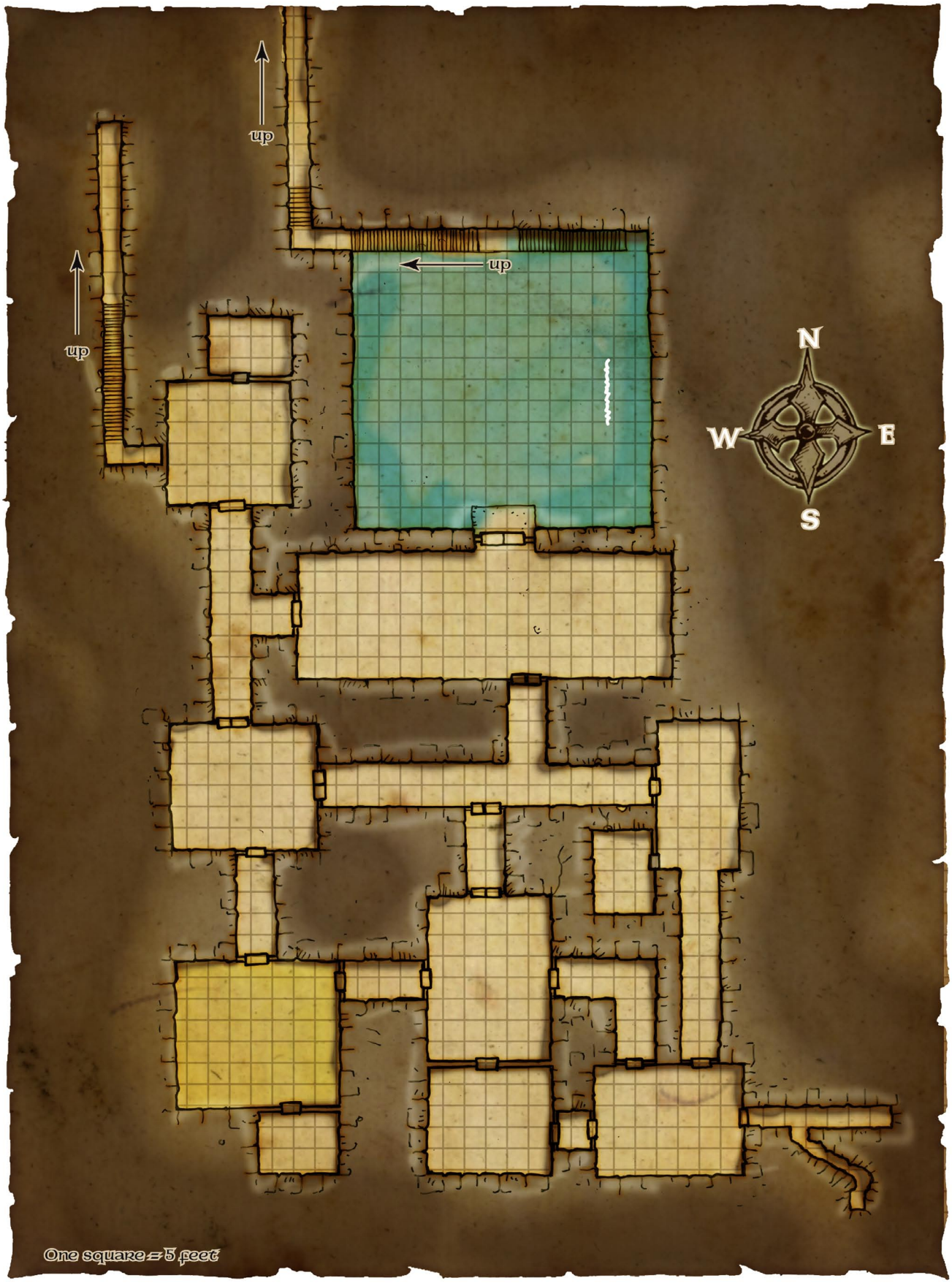

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